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# 전지적 독자시점

# **Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint**

**– 전지적 독자 시점 –**

**- Volume 1 -**

**-Author-  
Sing-Shong**

**[ Rainbow Turtle Translations ]**

# - STORY -

Only I know the end of this world.

# Prologue

## There are three ways to survive in a ruined world

[There are three ways to survive in a ruined world. Now, I have forgotten a few, but one thing is certain. The fact that you who are reading this now will survive.

-Three ways to survive in a ruined world]

A web novel platform filled the screen of my old smartphone. I scrolled down and then up again. How many times have I been doing this?

“Really? This is the end?”

I looked again, and the ‘complete’ was unmistakable.

The story was over.

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[Three Ways to Survive in a Ruined World]

Author: t1s123

3,149 chapters.

+

‘Three Ways to Survive in a Ruined World’ was a feature-length fantasy novel with 3,149 chapters. Its shortened name was ‘Ways of Survival.’

I have been steadily reading this novel since the third year of middle school.

During the time when I was bullied by iljins, when I ruined my entrance examinations and had to enter a local university, when the damned random draw went wrong and I was placed in the military unit at the forefront, when I repeatedly switched jobs and am now working as a contractor for an affiliate of a large company... Damn, let’s stop talking about this.

Anyway...

{Author's words: Thank you so much for reading 'Ways of Survival' up to here. I will come back to you with an epilogue!}

"Ah... The epilogue still remains. Then the next chapter is really the last one."

From the end of childhood to adulthood, it had been done over a huge period of 10 years. There was a mixture of despondency that a world was coming to an end along with a sense of satisfaction.

I opened the comment box of the last message and rewrote the sentence several times.

-Kim Dokja: Writer, thank you for everything in the meantime. I am looking forward to the epilogue.

They were sincere sentences. Ways of Survival was my life's novel. It wasn't the most popular, but it was the best novel for me.

There were many words I wanted to say but I couldn't write them. I was afraid that my careless words would hurt the writer.

-An average of 1.9 hits per chapter.

-An average of 1.08 comments.

This was the average popularity index of 'Ways of Survival.'

The number of views for the first chapter was 1,2000, but it fell to 120 for the 10th chapter, and then 12 for the 50th chapter. By the time it was the 100th chapter, it was only 1.

Hits= 1.

I was overwhelmed by the feeling I got when I saw the numerous '1' that appeared next to the list of chapters. In some cases, there was a '2', but it was likely someone pressing the wrong button.

'Thank you.'

The author published a novel with more than 3,000 chapters with just 1 hit per chapter over a period of 10 years. It was truly a story just for me.

I pressed on the 'Recommendation Board' and immediately started tapping on the keyboard, -I am recommending a honey jam novel.

The author wrote me a free completed novel, so I should give him a recommendation. I clicked on the completed button, and comments quickly appeared.

*-It looks like a new anti. I searched for this person's ID, and they recommended the same novel several times.*

*-Isn't his recommendation banned? The author shouldn't do this here.*

It occurred to me that I had written a recommendation several months ago. In an instant, there were dozens of comments for investigation by 'spectators'. My face flushed with embarrassment.

I was sure that the author would read this. So, I hurriedly tried to delete the message, but it was already reported that the message couldn't be removed.

"This..."

It was upsetting to think that the recommendation written with all my sincerity turned out like this.

If they even looked a little bit, why didn't anyone try reading the interesting novel? I wanted to give a donation to the writer, but I couldn't afford it because I was a salary worker barely able to make a living.

Then I received a notification that a 'message has arrived.'

*-tls123: Thank you.*

A message flew in from out of nowhere. It took me a while to grasp the situation.

*-Kim Dokja: The author?*

*tls123—it was the author of 'Ways of Survival.'*

*-tls123: I was able to complete it to the end thanks to you. I also won the competition.*

I couldn't believe it.

Ways of Survival won a competition?

*-Kim Dokja: Congratulations! What is the competition?*

*-tls123: You won't know it because it is an unknown competition.*

I wondered if he lied because he was ashamed, but I wanted it to be true. Perhaps I really didn't know. It might be a bit hit on other platforms. I was a little sad, but it was good to have an excellent story spreading.

*-tls123: I would like to send a special gift to you as a thank you.*

*-Kim Dokja: Gift?*

*-tls123: It is thanks to my dear reader that this story has come into the world.*

I gave the writer my email address as he asked.

*-tls123: Ah, right. I got the monetization schedule.*

*-Kim Dokja: Wow, really? When will it start? This masterpiece should've been paid from the beginning...*

It was a lie. The Ways of Survival was a daily series, so I would've had to spend 3,000 won a month. 3,000 won was one convenience-store lunch for me.

*-tls123: The monetization starts tomorrow.*

*-Kim Dokja: Then the epilogue coming tomorrow will be paid?*

*-tls123: Yes, I'm afraid you need to pay for it.*

*-Kim Dokja: Of course, I have to pay! I will buy the last one!*

There was no reply from the author afterward. I logged out of the site. Then I felt the pessimism sink in later.

The author left without a reply after he succeeded...? My admiration turned into petty jealousy. What was I so excited for? In any case, it wasn't my novel.

“Will he give a gift certificate? It would be good if it’s for 50,000 won.”

At that time, I was thinking naively. I didn’t know anything about what would happen to the world the next day.

# Chapter 1

## Starting the Paid Service (1)

“I’m Dokja.” (*Dokja= can mean only son or reader*).

I usually introduced myself to people like this, then the following misunderstanding would occur.

“Oh, are you an only child?”

“I am, but that isn’t what I mean.”

“*Huh?* Then?”

“My name is Dokja. Kim Dokja.”

Kim Dokja (Kim Highly Respected Only Son)—my father gave me that name to be a strong man by myself. However, thanks to the name my father gave me, I turned out to be just a normal single and lonely man.

In short, it was like this. I was Kim Dokja, 28 years old, and single. My hobby was reading web novels on the subway.

“Then I’ll go on my smartphone.”

In a noisy subway, I raised my head reflexively. A pair of curious eyes were staring straight at me. They belonged to an employee from the human resources team, Yoo Sangah.

“*Ah*, hello.”

“Are you going home from work?”

“Yes. What about Yoo Sangah-ssi?”

“I was lucky. The manager went on a business trip today.” Yoo Sangah sat down soon

as the seat next to me became vacant. A subtle scent came from her shoulders, making me nervous.

“Do you normally take the subway?”

“That...” Yoo Sangah made a dark expression.

Come to think of it, this was the first time I’d met Yoo Sangah on a subway train.

Starting with Personnel Manager Kang to Finance Manager Han... There were rumors that Yoo Sangah had men from the company driving her home every workday.

Yet unexpected words came from Yoo Sangah’s mouth, “Someone stole my bicycle.”

Bicycle.

“You commute by bike?”

“Yes! I have a lot of overtime these days and seem to be lacking exercise. It is a bit annoying, but it is worth doing.”

“Aha, I see.”

Yoo Sangah smiled. Looking closer at her, I could understand the feelings men held toward her. However, it was none of my business.

Every person had a genre of life, and Yoo Sangah was someone who lived a genre different from myself.

After the awkward conversation, we looked at our phones. I opened up the novel app I was reading on before while Yoo Sangah... What was this?

“Por favor dinero.”

“Huh?”

“Spanish.”

“...I see. What does it mean?”

“Please give me some money,” Yoo Sangah replied proudly.

Studying on the subway while going home... She truly had a genre different from me. However, what was the use of memorizing words?

“You’re working hard.”

“By the way, what is Dokja-ssi looking at?”

“Ah, I...”

Yoo Sangah’s gaze was fixed on the LCD screen of my smartphone. “Is it a novel?”

“Yes, well... I am studying Korean.”

“Wow, I also like novels. I haven’t been able to read lately because I don’t have time...”

It was surprising. Yoo Sangah liked reading novels...?

“Murakami Haruki, Raymond Carver, Han Kang...”

I thought so.

“Dokja-ssi, what writers do you like?”

“You won’t know even if I say their names.”

“I’ve read a lot of novels. Who are the authors?”

At this time, it was really hard to say that I read web novels as a hobby. I glanced at the title of the novel in the app.

[The World after the Fall]

Author: Sing Shangshong (*TL: The author uses the name of his previous novel and his author name, but with slight changes. I decided to go with the actual novel translation name*)

I couldn’t say that I was reading ‘The World after the Fall by Sing Shangshong.’

“It is just a fantasy novel. That... Well, like the Lord of the Rings...”

Yoo Sangah’s eyes widened. “*Aha*. Lord of the Rings. I’ve seen the movie.”

“The movie is good.”

The silence continued for a moment. Yoo Sangah was looking at me like she was waiting for me to say something.

Our conversation was becoming strained. So, I decided to change the topic. “It has been a year since I joined the company. This is my last year. Time moves really fast.”

“Yes. At that time, we both knew nothing, right?”

“That’s right. It seems like just yesterday, but the contract period is already over.” I realized that I’d said something wrong when I saw Yoo Sangah’s expression.

“*Ah*, I...” I had forgotten.

Yoo Sangah received credit for a foreign buyer last month and was already promoted to a full-time employee.

“*Ah*, right. My congratulations are late. I’m sorry. *Haha*, I should’ve worked hard to study a foreign language.”

“*Ah*, no Dokja-ssi! There is still the performance review and...”

I hated to admit it, but the sight of Yoo Sangah talking was wonderful. It was like the world’s spotlight was shining down on only one person. If this world was a novel, the protagonist would be such a person.

In fact, it was the inevitable result. I hadn’t tried, but Yoo Sangah made an effort. I just read novels on the Internet, while Yoo Sangah studied hard. It was natural that Yoo Sangah would become a full-time employee, and that my contract would be terminated.

“That... Dokja-ssi.”

“Yes.”

“If you don’t mind... Would you like to know the app I use?” Yoo Sangah’s voice momentarily became distant.

It felt like the world was far away. I braced my mind and stared straight ahead.

A boy was sitting in the seat opposite me on the train. He was 10 years old or so. The boy held an insect collecting net as he sat next to his mother, laughing happily.

“...Dokja-ssi?”

What if I had a different life from now? I mean, what if my life genre was different?

“Kim Dok...”

If the genre of my life wasn’t ‘realism’ but ‘fantasy’...Could I be the protagonist? I didn’t know. It would probably be unknown forever. However, there was one thing I knew.

“It is okay, Yoo Sangah-ssi.”

“*Huh?*”

“It won’t work even if you tell me the app.”

The genre of my life was obviously ‘realism.’

“Dokja has a solo life.”

“*Huh?* What...”

“I am just someone like that.”

In this genre, I wasn’t a protagonist but a ‘solo’ person.

“The life of a solo...” Yoo Sangah had a serious expression on her face

However, I waved my hands to show it was really okay.

I didn’t know why, but this person was really worried about me. Maybe because she was part of the personnel department... I was already aware of my performance though.

“Dokja-ssi is really good.”

“Yes?”

“Then I will live an ivory life.” (Sangah=ivory)

Yoo Sangah seemed to have decided something as she turned back to studying Spanish. I gazed at her for a while before returning to the novel.

Everything had returned to normal, but strangely, my scrolling of the novel didn't go well. Maybe it was because I realized the weight of reality that I couldn't scroll down.

At that time, a notification appeared at the top of my smartphone. [You have one new mail.]

It was from the author of 'Ways of Survival.' I opened the mail.

*-Reader-nim, my novel will become paid from 7 p.m. This will be helpful. Good luck.*

[1 attachment.]

The author said he would give me a gift. What was the gift?

...Like my name, I was also a reader by nature. So, I was excited to receive the mail.

Yes, it wasn't bad living as a reader.

I checked the time. It was 6:55 p.m. I had exactly five minutes before the novel became monetized at 7 p.m.

Then I opened up my list of preferred novels in the app. Since I was the only reader, I should leave a congratulatory comment and give strength to the author.

However...

*-The work doesn't exist.*

I tried typing 'ruined' several times in the search box, but the result was the same.

The bulletin board for 'Ways of Survival' had disappeared without a trace. It was

strange. Had there ever been a case of a novel being deleted without notification when it was going to be monetized?

At that moment, the subway lights turned off, and the inside of the train became dark.

*Kiiiiiiiik-!* The subway train shook loudly and let out a metallic sound.

It caused Yoo Sangah to scream and grab my arm. Then I heard the sound of other people getting stirred up. Yoo Sangah gripped my arm so tightly that I paid more attention to the pain in my left arm than the sudden stop. It took a dozen seconds for the train to stop fully.

Then I heard confused voices coming from everywhere.

“Uh, what?”

“W-What is this?”

In the dark, one or two smartphone lights turned on. Yoo Sangah still held my left arm tightly as she asked, “W-What is going on?”

I pretended to be unconcerned. “Don’t worry. It isn’t a big deal.”

“Is that so?”

“Yes, it is probably a disturbance from a suicide. The engineer will soon make an announcement.”

As I finished speaking, I heard the engineer’s announcement, *–Telling all passengers on the train. Telling all passengers on the train.*

The loud surroundings became calm.

I sighed and opened my mouth, “See, it isn’t a big deal. Now an apology will air, and the power will come back on...”

*–E-Everyone run away... Run...!*

‘What?’

There was a beeping sound, and the broadcast turned off. The inside of the train became a mess.

“D-Dokja-ssi? What is this...?”

A bright light flashed from the front of the subway train. There was a loud drumming sound followed by a *pop*.

Something was heading this way in the darkness. It was just a coincidence that I saw the clock at this moment—7:00 p.m.

*Tick*, it felt like the world was stopping.

Then I heard a voice:

[The free service of planetary system 8612 has been terminated.]

[The main scenario has started.]

This was the moment the genre of my life changed.

## Chapter 2

### Starting the Paid Service (2)

{Dokkaebi. The first time he appeared, someone said so.} (*Korean goblin.*)

I didn't know why but that sentence suddenly popped up in my head.

The stopped subway train, the dark room... These details gave me a sense of déjà vu.

The subway had stopped before, but it was rare. Even so, why? I remembered the familiar words from a novel... but it was ridiculous. Wasn't it impossible?

At this moment, the door of car 3807 opened wide, and the electricity returned.

Yoo Sangah muttered by my side, "...Dokkaebi?"

My head was ringing. I trembled uneasily as the novel I knew and the reality before me overlapped.

{With two small horns and wearing a small straw mat, the strange and fluffy creature was floating in the air.}

{It was too strange to call it a fairy, too evil to call it an angel, and too tranquil to call it a demon.}

{Thus, it was called a 'dokkaebi.'}

And I already knew the first thing the dokkaebi would say.

{&°}#@!&°}#@!..... }

[&°}#@!&°}#@!.....]

Fiction and reality overlapped precisely.

"What is this?"

“Augmented reality?”

Amidst the chattering people, I was thrown into another world alone. This was unmistakably a dokkaebi—the very dokkaebi that opened the door to tragedy for thousands of lives in Ways of Survival.

...It was Yoo Sangah’s voice that broke me out of my thoughts. “It sounds vaguely like Spanish. Should I talk to it?”

I was a bit taken aback and asked, “...Do you know what that is? Will you ask it for money?”

“No but...”

It was at this time that I heard the correct pronunciation of Korean. [*Ah. Ah.* Does this sound good? *Ah*, I had a hard time because the Korean patch didn’t work. Everyone, can you hear my words?]

As a familiar language was being spoken, I could see people’s expressions relax. Then the first one to step up was a big man in a suit. “Hey, what are you doing right now?”

[...Huh?]

“Are you filming? I have to go because I have to quickly get to an audition.”

He seemed to be an obscure actor since his face was unfamiliar. If I were a casting director, I would’ve picked him out for his brimming ambition. Unfortunately, the presence before him right now wasn’t a director.

[*Ah*, auditions. That’s right. This is also an audition. *Haha*, there was a shortage of data. I just entered when it was monetized at 7 p.m.]

“What? What are you talking about?”

[Now, now. All of you, relax in your seats and listen to me. From now on, I will tell you something very important!]

My chest was becoming stuffy.

“What? Quickly get off the train!”

“Somebody call the captain!”

“What are they doing without the cooperation of the citizens?”

“Mother, what is that? A cartoon?”

There was no doubt about it. This was the development I knew. I didn’t want to be mixed up in this... but there was no way. The people present wouldn’t listen to the small and cute-looking CG creature. The only thing I could do was stop Yoo Sangah who was trying to get up from her seat.

“Yoo Sangah-ssi, it is dangerous, so stay here.”

“*Huh?*” Yoo Sangah’s eyes widened.

I spoke during a moment of bewilderment, but there was no way to explain what I understood. To be exact, I didn’t have to explain.

[*Haha*, you are really loud.]

There was a presence with a stronger persuasive power than anyone else right now.

[I told you to be quiet.]

I closed my eyes slowly as the dokkaebi’s eyes turned red. Something burst, and the subway became silent.

“*Uh, uh. Uh...*” There was a big hole in the forehead of the unknown actor who had to go to the audition. The man who had spoken several times collapsed on the spot.

[This isn’t a movie shoot.]

There was a cracking sound once again. This time, it was the person talking about the captain.

[It isn’t a dream. It isn’t a novel either.]

One, two... Blood sprayed into the air as the heads of some people started to burst.

They were all the people who had protested against the dokkaebi, as well as the ones

who screamed or went wild. Those who caused the slightest fuss had a hole in their heads. Suddenly, the subway became a bloodbath.

[This isn't the 'reality' that you know. Do you understand? So everyone shut up and listen to me.]

More than half the people present here died. Blood and body pieces filled the subway. Now, the people didn't scream. Like primitive apes in front of a powerful predator, everyone just watched the dokkaebi with terror.

I was surprised and held tightly onto the shoulder of Yoo Sangah who was hiccuping.

This was real. The strange message which entered my ears, the dokkaebi had appeared in front of me, and the train car that had become a bloodbath...

[Everyone, your lives have been nice so far. Isn't that right?]

By the special needs seating, an elderly grandmother met the eyes of the dokkaebi.

[You have been living too long for free. Isn't life too generous? You were born and paid no price for breathing, eating, pooping and breeding! Ha! You really live in a good world!]

Free? No one in the subway lived for free. The people strived to make money in order to survive, and they rode the subway on the way home from work. Yet at this moment, no one disputed the dokkaebi's words.

[But now the good days are over. How long can you continue living for free? If you want to enjoy happiness, it is common sense to pay a price. Isn't that right?]

The gasping people couldn't answer. Then at that time, someone carefully raised their hand. "D-Do you want money?"

I wondered what type of person could speak in the middle of this situation, but surprisingly, I knew his face.

"Yoo Sangah-ssi. Isn't that Department Head Han of the finance team?"

"...Right."

There was no doubt. He was a typical parachute in the company and the number one person newcomers avoided. (Parachute: a person who relies on their connections) It was Han Myungoh, department head of the finance team. Why was that man riding the subway?

“I will give you money. Take it. Please note that I am a person like this.”

Department Head Han pulled out his business card as people cheered him on. It was the atmosphere of a savior fighting against terrorists.

“How much do you want? A big one? Or two?”

He was offering a sum that was overly large for a department head of a subsidiary company.

There was a rumor that Han Myungoh was the youngest son of the leader of the affiliate company and now I thought it might be true. I couldn't carry that many cheques in my wallet.

[*Hrmm*, you are giving me money?]

“T-That's right! The cash I have right now isn't much but... I can give you anything if you let me out of here.”

[Money, good. A plant fibre that many humans mutually agree on.]

The department head's expression brightened. It was an 'Indeed, money is everything' expression. How pitiful.

“Now, this is all I have—”

[It only applies in your time and space.]

“*Huh?*”

At the next moment, flames appeared in the air, and the cheques in the department head's hands burned up. Department Head Han let out a scream.

[That paper has no value in the macrocosm world. If you do this one more time, I will blow away your head.]

“U-Uhhh...” Fear once again spread on the faces of the people present. It was easy to read what they were thinking because it was just like the novel.

{What the hell will happen now?}

Only I knew what was going to happen in the future.

[*Phew*, the debt is piling up during the time when you are noisy. Well, yes. Rather than explain it a hundred times, isn't it quicker for you to make money yourself?]

The dokkaebi's horns rose like they were antennas, and its body floated to the ceiling of the train.

A moment later, a message rang out.

[#BI-7623 channel is open.]

[The constellations have entered.]

A small window emerged in front of everyone's blank eyes.

[The main scenario has arrived!]

+

[Main Scenario #1 – Proof of Value]

Category: Main

Difficulty: F

Clear Conditions: Kill one or more living things.

Time Limit: 30 minutes

Compensation: 300 coins

Failure: Death

+

The dokkaebi smiled faintly as it became transparent and disappeared into the next space.

[Then, good luck everyone. Please show me an interesting story.]

## Chapter 3

### Starting the Paid Service (3)

People reacted differently after the dokkaebi disappeared. Some people tried to get out of the train while others called the police.

Yoo Sangah belonged to the latter group. "Police, the police aren't answering! What, what should I..."

"Calm down, Yoo Sangah-ssi," I said, staring straight into Yoo Sangah's unfocused eyes. "Yoo Sangah-ssi. Have you ever played the game that the development team made? A game where the world is destroyed and only a few people survive."

"*Huh?* What are you say..."

"Think about it. We are in a game right now."

Yoo Sangah silently licked her lips. "Game..."

"It is simple. Don't hesitate to do as I tell you. Understood?"

"U-Understood. What should I do?"

"Stay still."

Finally, I slowly controlled my breathing. I too needed time to properly accept all of this.

[Three Ways to Survive in a Ruined World]

The descriptions that existed only in the novel were now unfolding right before my eyes.

{The dokkaebi stretched out its antenna.}

{The bodies scattered like trash in the carriage.}

{The bloodied office worker shaking.}

{An old lady groaning in her seat.}

I watched every scene intently. It was like Neo in the Matrix, who suspected reality. Observing, questioning, and then eventually being convinced... I had to admit it. I didn't know the reason why, but there were no doubts about it.

'Ways of Survival' had become a reality.

Let me think... How should I survive in this new world?

"Come on, everybody! Everybody calm down. Start breathing calmly." Someone stepped forward exactly five minutes after the dokkaebi disappeared.

He was a sturdy man with short cut hair, one head taller than the average height.

"Are you calm yet? Please stop your actions and pay attention to me for a moment."

The people sobbing or making calls stopped. Once everyone's eyes were gathered on him, the big man opened his mouth again, "As you know, in the event of a national disaster, small disturbances can cause large human casualties. That's why I will now control the situation."

"What, who are you?"

"A national disaster situation? What are you saying?"

Some people belatedly recovered and strongly resisted the world 'control.' Then the young man pulled a government official card out of his wallet. "I am currently an army lieutenant serving in the 6502 unit."

Some people's faces became relieved. "A soldier, he is a soldier."

However, it was too early to be relieved.

"I just received a message from my unit."

People gathered in front of the soldier's smartphone. I was able to read the contents without difficulty because I was near it.

*–A level 1 national disaster situation has occurred. All troops gather quickly.*

I could hear gulps all around me. It was a national disaster situation. I wasn't surprised because I had already expected this. In fact, I was surprised because of something else.

Army lieutenant Lee Hyunsung... That 'Lee Hyunsung' was this man.

I knew who he was. It was the first time actually seeing his face, but his name was clear in my head. He was one of the main supporting actors of Ways of Survival.

{Steel Sword Lee Hyunsung.}

A character from the novel had appeared. Now I really had to acknowledge the situation.

"Soldier-nim! What is happening?"

"I have been trying to contact my unit, but..."

"The Blue House! What is the Blue House doing? Please contact the president quickly!"

"I'm sorry. I am just an ordinary soldier and don't have a hotline to the Blue House."

"Then why are you taking control?"

"For the sake of the safety of all citizens..."

As Lee Hyunsung calmly responded to the absurd questions, I realized that the descriptions in the novel weren't wrong.

However, did Lee Hyunsung originally appear like this? While thinking about these complicated questions, I had a strange hunch.

As the only reader of Ways of Survival, I could assure you that Lee Hyunsung's first appearance wasn't like this. The point at which he appeared in the novel was at the end of the first scenario.

...Then what was this situation? My mind became confused. I would know more clearly if I could read Ways of Survival once again.

“The prime minister is making a speech! It is really a level one disaster!”

Everyone turned on their smartphones at someone’s cry. Yoo Sangah turned her screen toward me. “...Dokja-ssi, look at this.”

There was no need to enter a search term. It was because the first result for all portal sites was ‘Prime Minister’s Speech.’ Of course, I already knew the content of the video.

*–To all my fellow citizens, unidentified terrorists are currently active in an unspecified number of areas, including Seoul.*

The contents of the speech were simple. The current government would mobilize all means and methods to fight the terrorists, and there would never be any negotiations. Thus, everyone should confidently continue with their lives...

I hadn’t thought much of it when I read the novel, but now I was a bit shocked when hearing those words. Terrorism... Yes, that would be more comfortable.

“But where is the president? Why is the prime minister making the speech?”

“The president has already been hit.”

“What? Really?”

“I’m not sure. A Naver comment—”

“Shit, then it is fake!”

Of course, I knew it wasn’t a fake comment.

*“Uwaaaaack! What?”*

People dropped their phones as gunshots were heard from all over. It originated from their smartphones.

*Chiiiiik*, there was a loud sound, and blood filled the screen. After a moment, people held their breaths as they realized what had happened.

“P-Prime Minister...”

The prime minister had died. His head had exploded in real-time. There were several more sounds like gunfire before the screen became silent. The next thing that appeared on the screen was a dokkaebi.

[Everyone, I've told you already. This isn't a game like 'terrorism.']

People were at a loss for words as their mouths gaped open like dumb goldfish.

[Do you still not understand? This won't do. Do you still feel like this is a game?]

It felt so ominous because his tone was so relaxed. Subconsciously, I made a fist using all my strength.

[*Haha*, according to the data, the people of this country are very good at games. So, why don't I try raising the difficulty?]

*Beeep*. A huge timer appeared in the air. At the same time, it started decreasing rapidly.

[The remaining time has been decreased by 10 minutes.]

[There are 10 minutes remaining.]

[If the first killing doesn't occur within the next five minutes, all lives in that carriage will be wiped out.]

"W-What is this? Is it a joke?"

"Didn't you hear the message just now? Hey, didn't you hear it?"

"Soldier-nim! What do we do now? Why isn't the police coming?"

"Everyone, calm down and listen to me—"

The words of the dokkaebi caused the situation in the carriage to become so severe that Lee Hyunsung couldn't fix it. I could feel Yoo Sangah gripping my collar tightly.

Still, I couldn't shake off the incongruity of this situation. Lee Hyunsung, a supporting character, had already appeared. So, why hadn't 'he' emerged? According to what I knew, I should've seen him by now.

"T-There is a murder back there!"

A scene from the 3907 train car could be seen through the aisle window. The complexion of the killer in that carriage was white.

“We have to keep them out! Don’t let anyone in!”

People held tightly to the iron door, but it wasn’t necessary. The enemy wasn’t there in the first place.

[All types of access to the carriage will be restricted until the scenario is complete.]

Along with this message, people were thrown back from the iron door like they had hit a transparent barrier.

“W-What is this?”

Once again, the voice of the dokkaebi rang out, [*Haha*, there are some places that are quite fun while other places haven’t started yet. Okay, this is a special service. I will show you what will happen if nothing occurs in the next five minutes.]

A giant screen appeared in the subway. The place that appeared on the screen was a classroom. Girls in their navy blue school uniform were shaking.

A boy bit his fingernails and muttered, “...Is that the school uniform of Daepong?”

*Beep beep beep beep*— An ominous beeping sound was heard.

Then the high school girls started to scream.

[The given time has run out.]

[Paid settlement will begin.]

Once the announcement ended, the heads of the high school girls sitting in the front row exploded.

One by one, one by one again... More and more heads exploded. The high school girls screamed and ran toward the classroom doors or windows.

“*Ahh, uh*, how—”

Cleaning tools broke and nails were torn out, but the doors didn’t open. No one could

get out.

*Peong, peeong.* The heads of the high school girls continued to burst. Then a high school girl strangled her friend, who died with a groan. After a while, the only thing that remained on the screen was the last schoolgirl looking around.

[#Bay23515 channel. Daepong Girls' High School, Year 2 Class B survivor: Lee Jihye.]

The figure of the girl on the screen disappeared. Then the dokkaebi asked, [How is it? Interesting?]

The dokkaebi spoke with a smile, but people weren't looking at the screen anymore. The people who made eye contact were gradually moving away from each other.

"Shit! What is this?"

Even Yoo Sangah released her hold on me. However, she didn't move away from me. Both my hands were freed, and I turned on my smartphone.

Why was 'that guy' still not showing up? There was a mixture of information that I knew from the novel and information that I didn't know.

The only way to break through this situation was to read *Laws of Survival* again. However, where else could I find the novel? The novel wasn't popular enough to be shared illegally... No, wait a minute.

[1 attachment.]

I was stunned for a moment as I saw the notification on my smartphone. Perhaps... No? I was confused the moment I opened the mail attachment.

The name of the attachment sent by the author was:

[Three Ways to Survive in a Ruined World.TXT]

# Chapter 4

## Starting the Paid Service (4)

Laughter emerged. I had to clear my eyes and look again to see if it was a lie. The file extension was TXT. Then this person... The gift he sent me was a copy of his novel?

[You have obtained an exclusive attribute.]

[The exclusive skill slot has been activated.]

I heard a message in my ear after running the file. It wasn't surprising if the world had changed into 'Ways of Survival.' All survivors of Ways of Survival had exclusive attribute and skills.

I quietly said 'Attribute Window' in my mind. I needed to know the attribute that I received.

[You can't activate the Attribute Window.]

What? I once again tried to call out 'Attribute Window' but the result was the same.

It was absurd. There was something like this? If I couldn't use the Attributes Window, I couldn't know what attributes or skills I have.

Knowing oneself and one enemy's meant being invincible. But this was a situation where I didn't even know myself, let alone the enemy.

After staring into space for a while, I gave up and decided to read the text that the author gave me.

[Your reading speed has increased due to the effect of the exclusive attribute.]

I didn't know what the attribute was, but it took me less than a minute to read the first act of Ways of Survival thanks to the attribute effect.

I found it. The place where my finger stopped was the beginning of the work, where the main character was doing some 'action' in the train scene.

{He saw people gathered at the back door of the 3707 carriage. The wheel of the tightly held lighter was cold.

In this life, he absolutely couldn't make a mistake. He would use any means for his purpose.

The expression of fear on the people's faces. He didn't feel any guilt.

Everything was fleeting.

He looked at the people with merciless eyes. After a while, his fingertips moved and fire rose. Then it all started.}

A chill went down my spine and I had to read the passage again and again. The reason for my discomfort was soon revealed.

"...3707."

I reflexively checked the number of the carriage I was riding.

[3807].

The carriage I was on right now was behind the carriage that the protagonist was riding. My hands faintly shook.

...Wait a minute. How many people originally survived this carriage?

{He looked through the blurred window at the 3807 carriage. It was already too late. It was inevitable. Anyway, only two people survived in that carriage.}

Only two survived. It meant that everyone died except for two people. And I already knew who those two people were.

I raised my head and looked blankly at Yoo Sangah. Maybe this woman would die. Me as well.

"Dokja-ssi, shouldn't we stop this?"

Something was starting in the place where Yoo Sangah pointed. It was groaning. A young man was crouching down in front of the elderly woman.

“Shit, I’m in a bad mood and this old lady keeps whining and groaning! Won’t you shut up?”

The young man was a male student who had been leaning against the entrance.

He was thin and had dyed white hair. His name was written on the badge attached to his uniform.

Kim Namwoon. It was a name that I knew.

{Only Lee Hyunsung and Kim Namwoon survived in that carriage. It doesn’t matter. They are the only two I need anyway.}

“Didn’t I tell you to shut up?”

The agitated Kim Namwoon grabbed the grandmother’s collar. The grandmother’s powerless legs staggered. Kim Namwoon’s palm moved through the air.

*Slap. Slap.*

In normal times, somebody would run to stop this. But now nobody was moving. It wasn’t long before the slaps changed to punches.

“S-Save me. Save me...!”

I could hear the sound of a hard fist hitting flesh. Some of the men around Kim Namwoon hesitated but none of them wanted to go forward. Surprisingly, the first person to act was Han Myungoh.

“Young me, treating an elder like this...!”

However, all he got in reply was a voice mixed with scorn.

“Mister, do you want to die?”

“...What?”

“You still don’t understand the situation?”

“What bullshit is this brat saying?”

Kim Namwoon only laughed at the cursing Han Myungoh. He pointed to the ceiling of the subway carriage with his finger.

“Can’t you see that?”

On the ceiling, a holographic screen was playing.

[S-Spare me!]

[Aaaack!]

[Die! Die!]

It wasn’t just train carriages or Daepong High School. It was a live video of people dying all over the country. Kim Namwoon continued speaking.

“You still don’t understand? The army isn’t coming to rescue us. And somebody must die.”

“W-What are you saying...?”

“We have to choose a person to die.”

Han Myungoh wasn’t able to answer. The hairs of his exposed wrist were standing up.

“Of course, I know what you are thinking. You have to kill your fellow countrymen to live. It is something only sons of bitches will do. But you know, it is a force beyond our control. Beyond our control. We will die if we don’t kill. Who will blame us? Are you going to die in the end because of your morals?”

“T-That...”

“Think carefully. The world you have known so far has just ended.”

Han Myungoh’s shoulders trembled. It wasn’t only Han Myungoh. Cracks were showing in people’s eyes. It was a scene where the vague morality was collapsing. Kim Namwoon put a wedge in that crack.

“A new world requires new laws.”

Kim Namwoon. A young man who adapted to the world of Ways of Survival the fastest.

Kim Namwoon turned around and resumed punching the grandmother. This time, nobody stopped him. Han Myungoh, the other men... Even Lee Hyunsung.

The soldier's fists were trembling as he stared into the air with a lost expression. Maybe he had also made a decision.

"Sigh... It is hard to kill. Are you doing to just watch? Do you want to fall behind?"

People trembled at Kim Namwoon's words. Their facial expressions were as easy to read as the sentences in a cheap novel.

{If there is no killing in five minutes, everyone in this carriage will die.}

People's eyes were changing.

{If the grandmother doesn't die, we will die in five minutes... }

The most primitive eyes that a living creature could have.

"Yes... This bastard is right. If we don't do this, everyone will die."

The first man rushed towards Kim Namwoon. He kicked at the old lady who had collapsed and was curled up.

"Have you forgotten? Someone must die! So we can live!"

"Ah fuck... I don't know."

The second and third.

The people standing aloof from the grandmother. The cowardly men who had been lingering. The university student filming this with their phone. The mother of the child and Han Myungoh.

They all lynched the grandmother, aiming for her death.

"Die! Die quickly!"

They were like guards cooperating for the death penalty. Like the guards pulling the lever at the same time so they couldn't tell who killed the prisoner, these people passively kicked and punched the grandmother.

And I was watching all of this. I was standing by, like someone watching what happened in another world.

The grandmother whose name I didn't know was someone who wasn't meant to live. In the original scenario, the grandmother died. So... It wasn't a sin to observe that death.

At that moment, Yoo Sangah got up.

"You will be killed." I reflexively grabbed her. "I told you not to move."

The arm I was holding was shaking. Yoo Sangah made tight fists in an attempt to hide her trembling.

"I know, I know...!"

"Yoo Sangah-ssi will die if you go now."

Yoo Sangah's eyes were shaking with fear. Even so...

I realized it. Despite the genre of the story changing, some people still shone brightly.

"Yoo Sangah-ssi. Sit down."

However, the person who could change this story wasn't Yoo Sangah. Yoo Sangah wasn't the protagonist of this world.

"Huh? But—"

"Do as I say, just this once. I won't interfere after that."

After forcibly putting Yoo Sangah back in her seat, I took a deep breath and turned around. I straightened my back and shook as I breathed out. I slowly loosened my ankles and wrist.

In fact, it was a little early to come forward. This wasn't my plan originally.

“...Dokja-ssi?”

I didn't answer her call as I looked at the people. The people intent on assaulting the grandmother.

I wasn't still because I was afraid of Kim Namwoon and the people, nor did I consent to their inhumanity.

I was just waiting. It was for the moment I had to move. Thus...

*Kwaang!*

Right now.

“Ack! What?”

An explosion filled my ears and the train shook. People cried out. Smoke rose from the front right corner of this carriage. It had started. ‘He’ had moved.

I kicked off from the ground as hard as I could with my right foot. I passed by the people screaming and sitting down towards the grandmother.

“What? Eeeeek!”

Kim Namwoon collided with me and fell to the ground with a scream. At first glance, it seemed like I was saving the grandmother, but that wasn't what I was aiming for.

Where was it? I looked around quickly.

Somebody had fallen towards the grandmother due to the explosion. It was a kid crying in the middle of this hell. The kid who was holding the insect collecting net before.

“Excuse me a moment.”

I took the net from the child.

Once I put my hand into the net, the chitin of a grasshopper reached my fingertips. I took one out and placed it in the kid's hands. Then I turned towards the people.

“Everybody stop. You can’t live if you kill the grandmother.”

My voice was surprisingly clear due to the temporary silence after the explosion. One by one, people started looking at me.

“Let’s say you kill the grandmother. What next?”

Their surprised faces looked good. Let me tell you a bit more.

“The grandmother’s death will be recognized for what the dokkaebi calls the ‘first murder’ and some time will be bought. Then what next?”

“Ah...”

“If what the dokkaebi says is true, you each have to kill one thing. So who will you kill after the grandmother? Will you kill the person next to you?”

The people who thought about something retreated from each other. Horror was in their eyes. In fact, everyone knew. The grandmother was just the beginning.

Kim Namwoon noticed the shaky atmosphere.

“Haha, what are you all worried about? Then kill him next! Cowards. Don’t worry about your turn in advance! The odds are equal!”

I figured that Kim Namwoon would say something like this. I cut him off with a slight wave of my hand.

“There is no need to gamble like that. There is a way for you to survive, even if you don’t become a killer.”

“What?”

“W-What is it?”

The people became greatly agitated. Kim Namwoon’s expression distorted.

“Have you forgotten? The scenario clear condition wasn’t to ‘kill a person.’”

Most people were still puzzled but a few people noticed something.

[Kill one or more living things.]

That's right. From the beginning, the word 'person' was never specified in the contents of the scenario.

Kill one or more living things. In other words, any life was possible. A quick-witted person shouted at the collection net in my hand.

"Insect! Insects!"

The grasshoppers were jumping in the collection net. People's eyes were shining. I nodded.

"That's right, the insects."

I put my hand into the net and took out a grasshopper. It was a chubby one that I saw earlier.

"G-Give that to me! Quickly!"

"One only! I just need one!"

I stepped back slowly as I looked at the approaching people. I was now facing the explosive madness that tried to kill the grandmother. Yet a smile emerged. Why? Even in this breathtaking tension, why was my heart beating with joy?

"Would you like it?"

I waved the net like a trainer provoking an animal. Several impatient people leapt towards me.

"Then catch them!"

I smashed the grasshopper in my hand.

[You have achieved the 'First Kill' achievement!]

[100 coins have been earned as additional compensation.]

At the same time, I threw the net in my other hand as hard as possible. It was towards the opposite side of the area where the grandmother and the crowd was gathered.

“This is crazy!”

The insects were released and jumped as hard as they could for freedom.

## Chapter 5

### Starting the Paid Service (5)

People panicked as they saw the insects running around the carriage.

“H-Hey! Why would you do such a thi—”

While some people were staring blankly, the quick-witted pushed toward me.

“You son of a bitch.”

“...You better find them soon. There are only three minutes left.”

These words were a signal as people started to look everywhere among the subway seats like beasts who had lost their minds.

“I got it! *Aaack!*”

The joy of those fortunate enough to obtain an insect, as well as the malicious attacks on them, caused the carriage to become chaotic.

“Hey, why did you do that? Couldn’t you have just given them the insects?”

Looking back, I saw Kim Namwoon raising his body. I responded cautiously to Kim Namwoon, who was stretching his neck, “There are 12 people remaining.”

“...*Huh?*”

“There were three insects left in the collecting net.”

Kim Namwoon frowned for a moment before smiling broadly. “12 to 3? *Hahahahat!* Yes. Not all of them can survive anyway? So you threw that thing?”

“Yes.”

“Don’t make me laugh.”

“...?”

“A person with common sense wouldn’t do such a thing for that reason.” Kim Namwoon’s smile widened. “Tell me honestly. You just wanted to see this scene, didn’t you?”

I recalled the Kim Namwoon that I knew from Ways of Survival.

At this moment, I heard a message in my ears, [Exclusive skill, ‘Character List’ is activated.]

Next, a window opened in front of my eyes. I still didn’t know exactly what my attribute was, but I looked at the window in front of me.

[Character Information]

[Name: Kim Namwoon.

Age: 19.

Constellation Support: None (Two constellations are currently showing interest in this person).

Private Attribute: Chuunibyou (General)

Exclusive Skills: Unusual Adaptability Lv. 3, Knife Fighting Lv. 1, Blackening Lv. 1

Overall Stats: Stamina Lv. 3, Strength Lv. 4, Agility Lv. 6, Magic Power Lv. 4

Overall Rating: A chuunibyou who was blackened by a special occasion. It is recommended that you don’t get involved with him.]

Most of the chuunibyou that appeared in Ways of Survival committed suicide because they couldn’t endure the nightmare that had become real. However, the chuunibyou before me, Kim Namwoon, was different.

He was the Delusion Demon, Kim Namwoon. The young man, who later became known by this nickname, wasn’t an ordinary chuuni.

This young man had been waiting for the destruction of the world for a long time and adapted to this world at an ‘unusual speed.’

“Team up with me. How about it?” That young man was now making an offer to me.

[The character ‘Kim Namwoon’ has a favorable impression of you.]

[Your understanding of the character ‘Kim Namwoon’ has increased.]

My immediate survival was guaranteed if I held hands with Kim Namwoon. If I hadn't read *Ways of Survival*, my choice might've been a little different.

"I'm sorry but I like to be alone."

"Really? *Hmm*, it is regrettable." Kim Namwoon licked his lips lightly and stood close to me. "Then can you step aside? I have something to do with that old lady behind you."

Hearing his words, I looked back to see that the bleeding and collapsed grandmother was barely breathing.

"What do you want?"

"Do you have to ask?"

"You aren't catching the insects?"

"Insects? Why would I catch that?" Kim Namwoon laughed. "I already have a caught insect in front of me."

I could feel Kim Namwoon's murderous spirit. The character that had only existed in the novel was facing me with vivid madness. Therefore, I felt a little bit in awe.

Kim Namwoon was really the person I had imagined.

[The character 'Kim Namwoon' has a slight decrease in favorability.]

"What are you looking at? Aren't you going to move aside quickly?"

"It is tough."

"What?"

"I won't move aside."

"*Haha*, are you now going to imitate the apostle of justice? Do you have multiple personalities?"

I didn't answer.

A dark shadow slowly crept onto Kim Namwoon's face, and his shining eyes were becoming cold. "No, wait a minute. Did you throw the net over there to do this from the beginning? Really?"

"..."

"You want to save the grandmother? *Hahaha!* Amazing! Really amazing! No? Yes?"

I still didn't answer. As I looked closely at this guy, old memories resurfaced.

"Ah, it turns out that you are the type of person I hate the most. All old bastards are the same."

They were memories of all the times I had been frustrated by this brat during Ways of Survival.

[The character 'Kim Namwoon' despises you.]

"What did you say?"

I considered the timing and lowered my head, avoiding the fist that flew before the words were even over.

"Oh, not bad?"

Despite knowing it was coming, I felt a sense of heat from above my head. It wasn't an ordinary punch.

[Blackening Lv.1]

A dark aura rose from Kim Namwoon's whole body. This was the exclusive skill of the 'chuunibyou' attribute.

It was rare to release a skill before the end of the first scenario, but Kim Namwoon was already showing a skill. There was a reason why the main character had recruited him, despite his psychopath nature.

*Peeok!*

After he hit it, my right shoulder spasmed. There was no way to win if I kept fighting

this way.

...Should I use 'that' now? I was calculating the time when I heard a message.

[Your understanding of the character 'Kim Namwoon' has increased.]

[You are close to the conditions of use for the exclusive skill 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint Lv. 1.]

Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint? What was this?

[The conditions of use for the exclusive skill 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint' Lv. 1 have been reached!]

Kim Namwoon's fist missed me and struck the ground.

*"Haha, what? Haven't I become stronger?"*

A faint fist mark was left on the ground. Kim Namwoon was realizing his current strength little by little.

*Kwang! Kwang! Kwang!*

The fist that could break a bone with a single blow kept hitting the ground. Kim Namwoon was frustrated and couldn't control his temper. *"Ah, why can't I hit you?"*

Of course, he couldn't hit me. It was all thanks to my second skill.

[Exclusive skill, Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint Lv. 1 has been activated!]

As soon as this skill was activated, I was able to observe Kim Namwoon's attack direction like I was reading his inner thoughts. For example, like this...

{Right side.}

I quickly moved away from the direction of the attack.

{Right eye.}

Then I quickly bent down and avoided the flying fist.

“You really are good at not being hit!”

It was unreasonable to counterattack because I was poor at sports, but I could at least avoid most of the attacks.

{Left thigh.}

This was enough to endure it. The important thing was to buy time. I avoided Kim Namwoon’s first and pointed at the clock in the air. “There are two minutes left, Kid.”

The distressed Kim Namwoon alternated looking between me and the grandmother. “Dammit!”

At the moment of choice, Kim Namwoon’s gaze was fixed on the grandmother’s side.

I was forced to grab the grandmother and roll away. If the grandmother died, Kim Namwoon would clear the scenario. No matter what, I absolutely couldn’t send this guy onto the next scenario.

“*Haha*, I knew you would move like that.” As Kim Namwoon took something out of his bag, I had an ominous feeling.

A blade shone in the fluorescent light. It was a portable MacGyver Knife. I had forgotten. This person was a diehard military otaku.

*Swiiik-*

There was a link between the technical skill ‘Knife Fighting’ and the strengthening skill ‘Blackening’. The direction that the blade was pointing was obvious.

{Heart.}

It was an attack that couldn’t be avoided even if I knew the direction. So, I made a quick judgment. If I couldn’t avoid the attack, it was better to be hit somewhere with minimal damage, if possible.

*Chiiiiik!* The blade narrowly missed my heart and made a deep cut on my shoulder.

It hurt. It really hurt. There was a searing pain in my skin. My vision shook, and it felt like death was approaching.

*"Haha, now die!"*

The time remaining to the end of the scenario was 1 minute and 30 seconds. I glanced toward the grandmother. I was sorry for the grandmother, but now I really had to use 'that.'

"Chungil High School, 2nd year, Kim Namwoon. I have one question for you."

"...What?"

"Do you think an insect egg is a living thing?"

I took out the body of the grasshopper I had killed earlier from my pocket. The plump egg-sac was clearly abundant. There was the sound of something popping, and something fluid spilled out. The disgusting feeling spread over my hand as I heard a message.

.....

[You have killed a living thing.]

[100 coins have been earned as additional compensation.]

[You have killed a living thing.]

[100 coins have been earned as additional compensation.]

.....

Multiple messages bombarded my ears.

Kim Namwoon frowned. "Insect egg? What are you suddenly saying? Are you trying to waste time?"

"I guess so."

"How would I know something like that? I was always sleeping in Biology class." Kim Namwoon looked at my bloody shoulder and laughed happily. "But there is one thing I know for sure. Do you know what it is?"

"What is it?"

"You will die right now!" Kim Namwoon moved his Swiss knife before I could answer. It was an attack that was hard to avoid.

[A large number of coins has been acquired! Do you want to check the coin usage tips?]

I omitted the explanation that entered my ears. There was no need to listen when I already knew the contents.

“No, it is you who will die,” I spat out while inwardly muttering something else.

[2,700 coins have been invested into ‘stamina’.]

[Stamina Lv. 1 -> Stamina Lv. 10]

[Your stamina level has increased dramatically!]

[The durability of your body has greatly increased!]

Kim Namwoon’s knife penetrated toward my heart. To be exact, it looked like it was penetrating.

My skin was like solid rock, and the only thing that remained on it was a scratch.

Kim Namwoon’s eyes showed that he was astonished. “How?”

“I’ll tell you the correct answer to my question. The answer is: an egg is a living thing.”

“W-What?”

“And in spawning season, grasshoppers lay more than 100 eggs at a time.”

Egg, living thing, 100...

Unfortunately, the time left to understand the meaning of the information was too short for the schoolboy with a bad brain.

“What are you saying?”

“It doesn’t matter if you don’t understand. There is one minute left.”

Now fear appeared on Kim Namwoon’s face. “*Aaaah!* Die! Die!”

The knife moved toward my neck. I didn’t even bother defending against the attack.

*Kakakang!*

Was it because the area was more vulnerable than the chest? The wound was a little deeper than before, but it still didn't hurt much.

"Kim Namwoon."

Behind Kim Namwoon, there were people who were still crawling and looking for insects, as well as those who were willing to hurt each other for their own survival.

"You are right. I am the same type of human as you."

Maybe I could've saved some of those people.

"Shit! Why won't you die! Why won't you just die!"

55 seconds... 50 seconds... 45 seconds...

The knife kept leaving only scratches. Blood flowed but the blade couldn't reach under the skin. There were 30 seconds left when Kim Namwoon opened his mouth. He dropped the knife and knelt before me.

"S-Save me."

25 seconds.

"Save me! Please! Help me!"

"Why should I?"

20 seconds.

"P-People's lives are important! That's obvious!"

"That is the rule of the old world. It is just as you said. A new world requires new laws."

10 seconds.

"I don't want to, I don't want to! I don't want to die! *Aaaaaaack!*"

5 seconds.

Kim Namwoon ran at me with a loud scream and aimed for my eye. The moment that the knife tried to dig at my retina...

[The given time has run out.]

There was a loud sound, and Kim Namwoon's head exploded.

[Paid settlement will begin.]

Beginning with Kim Namwoon, people's heads started exploding everywhere. One, two, three, four...

The bursting heads were like fireworks announcing a new era. I watched the scene with a bit of joy, a bit of guilt, and a mysterious feeling.

Why? Why was I so calm at the sight in front of me? It was like I was looking at a novel.

[You have killed 124 living things.]

[Kill History: One grasshopper, 123 grasshopper eggs.]

[You have killed non-resistance living things, so the number of coins you have acquired is reduced by half.]

[6,200 coins have been acquired!]

[The number of coins used for the stats level up is automatically subtracted.]

[You have a total of 3,500 coins.]

[The 'Mass Murderer' achievement has been gained through excessive killing.]

My face could be seen on the darkened window of the carriage.

It was a face I had never seen before, despite looking into the mirror countless times in my life. I wiped at the blood on my cheeks. The blood wasn't erased. It turned out to be blood on the window.

*Kkiiik.*

There was a lurching feeling, and the train started to move again. It made the familiar train noise.

Soon, light flooded in, and darkness was lifted from the windows. We had arrived at the surface ground section of Line 3 between Apgujeong and Oksu.

Outside the window, the Han River and Seoul were revealed.

*Ahh.* Someone let out a moan. It was a moan which contained deep relief that they survived.

However, it didn't take long for the meaning of that moan to change. *Ah, ah...*

The landscape outside the window was no longer the Seoul that they knew. Smoke and dust rose from the ruined city.

The Han River bridges had collapsed. The Han River itself was red with the bodies of soldiers, while among the fallen buildings, a monster was trampling on a K1 tank like it was a toy.

[Main Scenario #1 – Proof of Value has ended.]

[300 coins have been acquired as a basic clearance reward.]

[100 coins have been reduced for the channel usage fee.]

[Additional compensation settlement will begin.]

One world was destroyed, and a new world was born.

...And I was the only reader who knew the ending of this world.

# Chapter 6

## Protagonist (1)

The subway stopped around halfway past Dongho Bridge.

“Oh my god...”

Several survivors stood up and looked at the scene taking place outside. The ruined Seoul and collapsed buildings. Monsters reminiscent of a giant snake were eating the wreckage of a fighter jet that had crashed into the Han River.

“W-What the hell...!”

I recognized their identity at once. An ichthyosaur. A monster that was commonly called a sea serpent. It would later be classified as a Grade 7 monster in the world of Ways of Survival.

One of the ichthyosaurs looked in this direction.

“U-Uwaaah! It is coming!”

People screamed with fright. But I just looked apathetically at the approaching ichthyosaur. These guys couldn’t be a threat.

*Kurururung!*

The ichthyosaur circled around the bottom of Dongho Bridge and vanished into an air bubble.

In the world of Ways of Survival, ‘scenarios’ took precedence over anything else. As long as we were protected by the scenario, we wouldn’t have to deal with such monsters straight away. At least for now.

[Compensation settlement is delayed due to an unexpected scenario check. Please wait.]

The compensation settlement should've started right now but only an error message floated in the air.

It was probably due to me. I looked down at Kim Namwoon's body, which only had the torso remaining.

According to the original Ways of Survival, Kim Namwoon killed most of the people in this carriage and moved onto the next scenario. But I stopped it.

If my thoughts were right, those who would be angry at Kim Namwoon's death would appear. Here? Not here. They were in the sky above.

[Due to the death of character 'Kim Namwoon', two constellations show a faint hostility to you.

Constellations. They were mysterious beings in Ways of Survival. They sat watching from the distant nebulas and were the masterminds of this tragedy.

Once the constellation's preferences sign appeared, I realized that it was now starting in earnest.

It was funny. A day ago, our positions were opposite. Now they were the ones watching me.

[A handful of constellations admire your scenario.]

[The constellations have sponsored you 500 coins.]

If there were some constellations who disliked me, there would also be some who liked me. Either way, it was an uncomfortable situation. However, I couldn't do anything about them right now. It was my turn to be a clown.

I picked up Kim Namwoon's Swiss knife on the ground and thought.

'Feel free to watch. You will end up paying the admission fee with your lives.'

"...Dokja-ssi? Are you okay?"

I looked up and saw Yoo Sangah's face. Her shoulders were sagging. Blood covered her white blouse and there was a run in her stockings. There was no more of the Yoo Sangah I knew. I held Yoo Sangah's hand and said.

“I’m sorry. I couldn’t save the grandmother.”

I looked down at the body of the grandmother, missing its head. I didn’t know the name of the grandmother. In the future, many people would die in this manner.

Yoo Sangah looked at me with a complicated gaze.

“How is Dokja-ssi so...”

“Yes?”

“Ah, it is nothing. Rather... Thank you.”

“What do you mean?”

“That, I...”

I belatedly thought back to the previous scene. I had thrown the net in Yoo Sangah’s direction. I knew what she was thinking.

“It was just a coincidence. It won’t happen twice.”

“Ah...”

Yoo Sangah nodded silently. She didn’t know the truth but she was smart. She knew what I meant. Someone lived because of my choice and someone else died. No matter who survived, I didn’t deserve a thank you.

[Wow, amazing.]

The dokkaebi appeared in the air.

[What on earth happened here? I was just watching the other carriages...]

There was a mixture of delight and surprise on the dokkaebi’s face. Twinkling stars floated over the dokkaebi’s head.

I counted the number of stars. One, two, three... Twenty, twenty one. Twenty one in total. He would be happy.

[For 21 people to be connected to my channel... Haha, isn't this quite good? Gosh, thank you for your sponsorship. Constellations. Haha, everyone! Did you properly show off your value?]

The number of stars meant the number of constellations connected to the channel.

21 wasn't a lot, but it was a strange number for a beginner dokkaebi.

[The number of survivors is quite high? The fellow in the next carriage was a nutter as well... It seems that things are quite interesting today.]

The dokkaebi manipulated something in the air. A moment later, a list of survivors came up.

[Survivors from the 3434 Train to Bulgwang, Carriage 3807: Kim Dokja, Lee Hyunsung, Yoo Sangah, Han Myungoh and Lee Gilyoung. A total of five survivors.]

Five people. More people than I thought survived. I looked at the faces of the survivors one by one.

Lee Hyunsung had a good physique and excellent motor skills, so it was expected that he would survive. I even expected Yoo Sangah to a certain extent.

In addition, Lee Gilyoung. If my guess was right, 'Lee Gilyoung' was the name of the boy standing next to me. The fluids from the crushed grasshopper was still on the boy's hands. It was the grasshopper I had squeezed.

The boy was looking at his mother, who lost her head. The boy's mother had abandoned him to join in on killing the grandmother. The boy had just watched the whole thing from beginning to end.

I hesitated for a moment before touching the boy's shoulder. It wasn't foolish sympathy. To put it simple, this was...

That's right. Hypocrisy.

"Kid."

The boy slowly turned his head and in his eyes, I could see the fear of death that he encountered for the first time in his life.

Unavoidable instincts. This boy wasn't grieving his mother's death. He was just afraid of his own death. It was natural. He was human.

"Do you want to live?"

The boy's eyes shook anxiously. His body trembled with a force that couldn't be resisted. Then little by little, the boy's head moved.

"Then let's go together."

Lee Gilyoung moved slowly and came close to my legs. Yoo Sangah was watching me with an impressed expression. I unintentionally caused another misunderstanding. In fact, it was meant to be seen. But the target wasn't Yoo Sangah.

[A few constellations are impressed with your good deed.]

[The constellations have sponsored you 200 coins.]

I couldn't help thinking that it was a low move. But I also wanted to live.

Given the upcoming major events, it was essential to draw the attention of the constellations right now.

"W-Will you release us now? Didn't you get what you wanted?"

Han Myungoh in a torn shirt shouted from half a dozen steps away. Department Head Han Myungoh. He was a lucky human.

But I couldn't help wondering. Why was Han Myungoh riding the subway when he had so much money? This was the man who had shown off a new S class Mercedes-Benz not long ago.

[Hrmm, released? Haven't you seen outside? Do you really want to go out there?]

The dokkaebi chuckled.

[It is somehow admirable. In fact, I didn't expect much from this carriage but you managed to pass the first scenario. This proves that bugs deserve to survive.]

His words made us realize our position. Maybe we were like grasshoppers in his eyes.

[Now now, shouldn't there be a reward for overcoming the hardships? As a reward for the first scenario, you are entitled to the sponsorship of the 'constellations.' Waahhh! How about it? Aren't you looking forward to it? Hmm, you are all unenthusiastic. This is really a big deal.]

The reaction was natural. I was the only one here who knew what 'constellation' or 'sponsorship' was.

The sponsorship of the constellations. The meaning was obvious. One of the key events of Ways of Survival, 'Sponsor Selection' was about to begin.

[Hmm, everybody has confused expressions. I can easily tell you. Right now, you are incredibly weak. If you are thrown into the scenarios that will take place, you will be killed when you meet a weak ground rat, let alone a 'kruk.' But kindly, there are some great people in the universe who pity you and would like to sponsor you. Do you understand what I am saying?]

Lee Hyunsung finally couldn't stand it anymore and opened his mouth.

"What are you saying? Who is sponsoring whom..."

[Hmm, my words are just entering dirty ears. Isn't there an old saying in South Korea? It is better to see it once than listen a hundred times. So experience it directly. Well, the less fortunate ones might not get the chance. Hahahat!]

I was tense. From now on. A good choice here would make my survival in the future easier.

"Dokja-ssi? Two strange choices suddenly appeared in front of me..."

"I don't know even if you ask me."

This was naturally a lie to avoid suspicions. By the way, there were two choices. Yoo Sangah was quite lucky.

"Do it comfortably. Think of it as an aptitude test."

"Aptitude test..."

"Nobody knows what the situation is anyway. Why not do it comfortably?"

“Ah... I understand.”

Yoo Sangah closed her mouth and started staring into space. It was a profound expression, as if she had encountered something curious.

The others suddenly became silent. Everyone was reading the options in front of them. I also had my own choices to look at.

[Sponsor Selection]

-Please select your sponsor

-Your chosen sponsor will be your strong supporter.

1. Abyssal Black Flame Dragon
2. Demon-like Judge of Fire
3. Secretive Plotter
4. Prisoner of the Golden Headband.

There were four choices like a riddle. It meant there were four constellations that wanted to turn me into their incarnation.

Four choices wasn't small considering that the protagonist of Ways of Survival received five options the first time.

The constellations never revealed their true name. Therefore, all contractors must infer the identity of the constellations by words such as 'abyssal', 'demonic' and 'garden'.

Of course, this puzzle was nothing to me, the sole reader of Ways of Survival.

Let's see.

First, the 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon.'

According to my memory, this constellation was a powerful entity that led the group of constellations called the Black Cloud. I forgot his real name but I remember it was a very long name.

The advantage of this constellation was that the contractor could receive a very strong attack power. In the early days when stamina and strength were in urgent need, there was no constellation as strong as the Abyssal Dark Flame Dragon.

Of course, that was limited to the beginning. As the power of this constellation was more frequently used, the mind became corrupted and the contractor would become a mad murderer.

This constellation usually sponsored the people with the 'chuuni' attribute... I didn't know why the constellation picked me. I felt uncomfortable and excluded this guy.

The second one, the Demon-like Judge of Fire.

I can't believe I was actually seeing this option. Somehow, the strong emotions I felt were enormous.

At first glance, the name was overflowing with evil. But this was actually a trap for the wicked. The 'Demon-like' actually meant 'not a demon.' Then the words 'fire' and 'judge' were added.

A being who wasn't a demon and who made judgments through fire. Paradoxically, the master of this constellation was an angel.

If I recalled correctly, it was Archangel Uriel... In fact, I remembered this because someone in the novel picked this constellation as a sponsor.

It was a pretty decent choice. This was pending. The constellations of 'absolute good' imposed ridiculous constraints if you wanted to use their enormous power.

The third, Secretive Plotter. It was the first time that I, the sole reader of Ways of Survival, had seen this choice.

This name might've been mentioned in passing but... I didn't know it right now. If I could read Ways of Survival more thoroughly then I might get a feel of the constellation.

But I was certain that the owner of this constellation wasn't a very strong entity. Apart from the obvious modifier, there wasn't one 'proper noun.'

Secretive Plotter, it was too simple for a constellation. This one was also pending.

Finally, there was Prisoner of the Golden Headband.

My heart jumped the moment I saw the fourth option. I didn't expect this constellation

so early. I doubted my eyes several times. But it was unmistakably 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband.'

At first glance, this name gave off a negative image due to the word 'prisoner'. But you had to pay attention to 'Golden Headband.'

Golden Headband. The smallest prison in the world.

It was a hint that anyone would recognize if they enjoyed reading Journey to the West as a child. There was only one prisoner who was held captive by the golden headband in the journey from east to west.

The master of the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit, who lived in suffering due to the shackle on his head. The Handsome Monkey King with the 'golden-gaze, fiery-eyes.'

The Great Sage the Equal of Heaven, Sun Wukong.

Among the characters that appeared in the novel, there was one supported by Sun Wukong.

A wondrous power that could sweep through hundreds of incarnations and to kill thoughts with one lightning strike.

The author had described this part with a lot of energy so my memory of it was clear.

I didn't know why such a powerful constellation was showing me interest but if I became the incarnation of the Great Sage the Equal of Heaven, I would be able to survive in this new world more easily than anyone else.

But...

I quickly looked at the door connected to the carriage in front. Beyond that door, 'he' was looking at the selection screen like me.

If I chose The Great Sage the Equal of Heaven... Could I win against him?

[There is one minute left to complete the Sponsor Selection.]

Time was running out. I breathed lightly and looked through my options. My worries didn't last long.

# Chapter 7

## Protagonist (2)

[Sponsor Selection has ended.]

I took a deep breath as I watched the messages floating in the air.

[Some constellations are greatly affected by your choice.]

Yes, it was starting now.

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is greatly displeased at your choice.]  
[The constellations belonging to Black Cloud are shaken by the anger of the Abyssal Black Flame Dragon. You won't be sponsored by any of the Black Cloud constellations for a while.]

I wasn't surprised because it was an expected message.

To make every member of his group turn away because he was rejected... it seemed that this guy was Kim Namwoon's sponsor in the original work. As expected of the incarnation of this constellation.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is disappointed in you.]  
[She will persistently monitor your justice in the future.]

In the case of Archangel Uriel, it was just disappointment. In the first place, the constellations of absolute good would rarely hate someone unless they committed a great injustice.

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' is interested in your choice.]  
[200 coins have been sponsored.]

The Secretive Plotter's case was unexpected. Given the characteristics of the name, maybe he valued my caution.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is interested in your choice.]

And the Great Sage the Equal of Heaven...

I was concerned. Did I make the right choice? I didn't know. Maybe I had lost the tremendous opportunity right in front of me.

[You haven't selected a sponsor.]

But choosing a certain constellation meant being limited by that possibility. The sponsor contract was never a fair deal.

I would survive. But I wouldn't survive by being their toys. And if my expectations were right, there was a way to become strong without a constellation. Maybe it was a way to become stronger than the incarnation of the strongest sponsor.

[Haha, is this true... isn't there one interesting choice? Well, yes. There will be another chance.]

The dokkaebi's crescent moon eyes stayed on me for a moment.

[Now now, everyone has finished the selection. Rest here for a while. I have to go prepare the next scenario. I'll see you in 10 minutes!]

After the Sponsor Selection finished, the dokkaebi disappeared. He told us to rest, but these 10 minutes were really crucial.

In 10 minutes, I needed to sort out this situation and prepare for the following scenarios. I tried to recall my abilities in my head.

[Character List] and [Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint].

I didn't know the precise use yet but I had a general sense of these skills. This will work somehow.

"Let's all gather together."

The survivors gathered at my words. The first one to reach out a hand was Lee Hyunsung.

"Hello, I am Lee Hyunsung."

“Kim Dokja.”

“Nice to meet you... although I don’t know if these words suit the situation. As I said earlier, I am a soldier... well, I should say that I was a soldier.”

“You can’t contact your unit?”

“...Yes.”

The grip around my hand was considerable. As expected from the tanker that appeared in the early stages of Ways of Survival.

I must take Lee Hyunsung with me. He might not look like much now but Lee Hyunsung was an increasingly important figure in the latter parts of Ways of Survival.

“Ah, Dokja-ssi.”

“Yes?”

“I wanted to thank you. If it wasn’t for Dokja-ssi, we would all be dead.”

“No, that isn’t the case.”

“Even if I had lived, I would’ve have been able to live as a person. Thank you very much. And... I am ashamed.”

Lee Hyunsung bowed deeply. My mind was a bit complicated. In fact, Lee Hyunsung would’ve survived even if I didn’t do anything.

Then somebody grabbed my shoulder.

“Haha, our contractor did one big thing. Dokja-ssi, do you know my name?”

I could tell who it was without looking back. I took the hand off my shoulder and said.

“I know, Han Myungoh-ssi.”

“Huh, Han Myungoh-ssi? Shouldn’t you call me Department Head?”

Han Myungoh was still trying to use his position in this situation. He really was the

king of authoritarianism in Minosoft.

“This isn’t the company.”

“Hah, look at this. Are you planning to not go work now? Where did you learn your basic etiquette?”

Once I saw Han Myungoh’s angry face, I once again realized that the world I knew was over.

The man in front of me was a ‘predator’ of the world before the scenario began. And I was merely a prey to the predator. It was certainly like that.

“No matter how I think about it, your actions were too much. Yes? If you had the insects then you should’ve tipped me off. Why would you throw them like that?”

“...”

“Dokja-ssi, you have to be good to me. How much time do you have left on your contract?”

All of a sudden, it became ridiculous. In the world I had lived in, I was too weak.

“Han Myungoh-ssi.”

“Eh?”

“Shut up.”

“W-What?”

“You still don’t understand the situation? Weren’t you hit by that bastard earlier? Minosoft? Do you think the company still exists when the end has come?”

Han Myungoh’s face was white and stricken.

I turned my eyes towards the other people. Since I was already saying it, I should make it stick.

“Han Myungoh-ssi isn’t the only problem. Everyone, you need to wake up. As the

dokkaebi said, this isn't a joke."

"..."

"I think you should've all roughly noticed the situation. Exclusive skills in the attributes window. A game-like interface. Is there anyone who still hasn't caught onto facts?"

Indeed, no one raised their hand. South Korea was easy. Due to the high penetration rate of smartphones, there wasn't one person who hadn't played a RPG game.

Even if they didn't play a game, they would've read a fantasy novel at least once.

Lee Hyunsung sighed.

This is like a novel I was reading while standing on duty, but I still can't feel it. This really isn't a dream?"

"This is reality."

My stern answer caused Lee Hyunsung's eyes to slightly change.

[The character 'Lee Hyunsung' feels a faint trust in you.]

[Your understanding of the character 'Lee Hyunsung' has increased.]

Lee Hyunsung nodded.

"It is good that you are certain. Then what do we do now? Dokja-ssi, do you have an opinion?"

"We have to go."

I answered without hesitation.

"G-Go? Are you insane?"

"Dokja-ssi, I don't think..."

This time, Yoo Sangah joined it. It seemed everyone still hadn't woken up.

“Then how long we will stay here?”

In fact, my argument didn't make much sense. Outside was a heaven of monsters. But I knew. Right now, we have to get out of here.

“Have you thought about your parents? Do you think your parents are safe in this mess?”

“T-The line has been dead for some time. No Kakaotalk...”

Yoo Sangah cried out desperately.

Indeed, Confucianism was still strong in South Korea. Even Lee Hyunsung and Han Myungoh's expressions darkened at the word 'parents.'

I grasped Lee Gilyoung's shoulder, whose head was bowed. The first person to get up was Yoo Sangah.

“Go. I will go out.”

“N-No! Didn't you hear what that thing said? Take a break here! If we move then our heads might explode!”

“Let's take a majority vote.”

Yoo Sangah raised her hand first, followed by me and Lee Gilyoung. But it was up to there.

“...I have to go to my base but it seems dangerous to move in this situation. There was also the warning.”

“Shit, you all go by yourselves! I'm not going! I'm not going outside!”

I didn't care about Han Myungoh but the problem was Lee Hyunsung. I had to take Lee Hyunsung with me no matter what...

*Kuuong!*

The thick iron plate made a loud sound. The iron door to carriage 3707 was slightly distorted.

“W-What?”

Han Myungoh’s cry was ignored as the iron door made a deafening sound again.

*Kuuong!*

Someone was trying to break the door from beyond it. This was an unexpected situation so I had to think.

Was it the next scenario? No. The dokkaebi hadn’t come back yet. Then...

My brain moved quickly. Small hairs stood up and a short shiver struck my body. That guy.

“W-What? Everybody stop it!”

Han Myungoh shouted and moved towards the door. Lee Hyunsung moved towards it as well but I stopped him.

“You can’t stop it.”

“Huh?”

“We have to go.”

I looked at the iron door with heavy eyes.

“Huh? But...”

“If we don’t go now—”

The only survivor of carriage 3707. I was well aware of who was beyond the iron door.

“We will all die before the next scenario arrives.”

Yes, that guy was finally coming. The ‘real’ protagonist of this story.

# Chapter 8

## Protagonist (3)

I stared straight into Lee Hyunsung and Han Myungoh's eyes and said.

"Do you want to die from that guy beyond the iron door or do you want to try your luck outside the train? Which one will you choose?"

"U-Uh..."

"Dokja-ssi, is there any guarantee that the person beyond the iron door is an enemy?"

The Steel Sword appeared at the crucial moment. There was a reason why Lee Hyunsung couldn't be leader of a party.

"Since they are coming from another carriage, it is likely to be a survivor. If we meet..."

I looked at the bloody room instead of continuing. Lee Hyunsung followed my gaze and quietly spoke.

"...I was too careless. Let's find a way out."

"G-Go! Go quickly!"

At this moment, both people were aware. The other survivors of the carriages would've gone through the same thing as them. They wouldn't have the good luck of finding 'insects.'

"This is broken!"

"Damn, we can't go this way!"

While listening to Lee Hyunsung and Han Myungoh's cries, I also checked the doors. There were no more barriers so the doors could now be touched.

Apart from the doors connecting the passageways, there were a total of eight access

doors on the subway. There were three exits that hadn't been confirmed yet.

*Kung!*

The iron door seemed like it could barely hold on for one minute.

Despite being the main character, I didn't think he would have such high strength in the beginning. I was honestly surprised that he could break such a thick iron door.

"Dokja-ssi! Here—"

I found a working manual switchgear.

"No!"

The opening and closing device worked smoothly but the door didn't open at once. The door opened around one fifth before stopping like it was jammed.

"...It seems to be broken here as well."

"How about other places?"

"This seems to be the only place where we can escape."

It was unknown for a child. But the gap was too narrow for men and women to escape. Han Myungoh and Lee Hyunsung tried to pull the doors open but they didn't move a bit.

[Coins Possessed: 4700 C]

One of the uses of the coins was to raise overall stats. I had already used 2,700 coins to make my stamina level 10.

This problem could be resolved if I used the remaining coins to enhance my strength. But it wasn't wise to use the coins when the situation was unknown.

In the end, there was only one way.

"Lee Hyunsung-ssi. Use a skill."

“Huh? “Skill...”

I quietly activated Character List.

[The exclusive skill, Character List is activated.]

[Character Information]

Name: Lee Hyunsung

Age: 28 years old.

Constellation Sponsor: Master of Steel.

Private Attribute: Soldier who Turned a Blind Eye to Injustice (General)

Exclusive Skills: Bayonet Skills Lv. 2, Camouflage Lv. 2, Patience Lv. 2.

Stigma: Great Mountain Push Lv. 1

Overall Stats: Stamina Lv. 8, Strength Lv. 8, Agility Lv. 7, Magic Power Lv. 5.

Overall Evaluation: The overall stats are very good. Despite turning away from injustice, he received the choice of a constellation. This is another opportunity for him.

Lee Hyunsung’s information came to my mind without any restrictions. Fortunately, the sponsor was the same as what I read in Ways of Survival.

“You should’ve checked it when you opened the attributes window. Lee Hyunsung is a soldier so there must be a skill you can use in this situation.”

“Well... I have one but how do I use it—”

“Just think about using the skill.”

“...Will that work?”

“It will. I did it earlier.”

Lee Hyunsung didn’t say anything else as he took a deep breath of determination.

“Haaap!”

Lee Hyunsung’s biceps swelled as he grabbed the door. It was the appearance of Great Mountain Push.

In fact, Great Mountain Push wasn’t a skill but a ‘stigma.’ And a stigma was a power from the constellation. I used the word ‘skill’ in order to avoid suspicions.

*Dudududu.*

There was a sound like a huge spring turning and the door started to move.

“What? This guy has real strength!”

“That’s it! It is really great!”

[The character ‘Lee Hyunsung’ has started to trust you.]

[Your understanding of the character ‘Lee Hyunsung’ has increased.]

Rather than doubts, my reliability had risen. Lee Hyunsung was a simpler person than I thought.

“Come on, get off!”

But I felt relieved. I handed Lee Gilyoung to Lee Hyunsung.

“Lee Hyunsung-ssi. Carry the child on your back.”

“I understand.”

Now the iron door was almost broken. But if my prediction was right, the problem right now wasn’t that iron door.

[...Ah, this is really. I knew this would happen. Didn’t I saw it earlier? I told you not to go anywhere, Damn! The scenario isn’t ready yet-]

The dokkaebi seemed to be angry as it floated over Dongho Bridge.

“Wahh! I knew this would happen! I told you not to come out!”

Han Myungoh wrapped a hand around his head, like he thought it would explode. But there was no need to worry.

[Sigh... it can’t be helped. You are really lucky humans.]

It was because the second scenario started the moment the train door was opened.

[The second scenario has arrived!]

+

[Second Scenario – Escape]

Category: Sub

Difficulty: E

Clear Conditions: Cross the broken bridge and enter Oksu Station.

Time Limit: 20 minutes.

Compensation: 200 coins.

Failure: ???

+

“Dokja-ssi, something is strange. It says the ‘broken bridge’ but the bridge is still...”

“Don’t worry and just run! Quickly!”

“U-Understood!”

In fact, Yoo Sangah was right. The bridge hadn’t been broken yet. In other words, the ‘bridge was going to be broken.’

“Dokja-ssi, come quickly!”

“I’m coming.”

It hadn’t been broken yet because we got off the train ‘too soon.’ The dokkaebi said the preparation time was 10 minutes. But we escaped three minutes earlier.

Some people might call it cowardly but this scenario couldn’t be cleared without such a shortcut. Especially if I was stuck with burdens such as Yoo Sangah and Lee Gilyoung.

“Pant, pant. Indeed, Lee Hyunsung-ssi is a soldier and has high stamina.”

“Don’t open your mouth. You will lose strength.”

Lee Hyunsung was running first with the kid. He was a natural monster who didn’t invest any coins in his stats, yet the sum of his strength, stamina and agility exceeded 23.

The next one was Han Myungoh and then Yoo Sangah with me in the rear. It would be close but I thought we could make it in time.

“Ah, what is that?”

At this time, Han Myungoh’s scream was heard. There was a huge whirlpool in the centre of Han River, letting out splashes of water.

And a giant monster was at the centre of the splashes. An ichthyosaur. The problem was that the ichthyosaur seemed to be twice the size of the one I saw through the window.

This wasn’t a sea serpent... it was a sea commander.

A general sea serpent was only a grade 7 monster. Given that a grade 9 monstrous land rate was difficult for normal humans to cope with, an average human would be torn apart by a grade 7 monster.

In other words, the guy coming now wasn’t a monster that could be caught in the early stages. Of course, there was no need to catch it. It wasn’t created to be caught.

*Ku ku ku ku!*

The Han River surged like there was a tsunami and the ichthyosaur moved. It was chewing on the legs of the bridge.

“The bridge is breaking!”

“Run! If we run then we can cross it!”

The remaining distance was around 200 metres. If my calculations were correct, we could cross before the bridge collapsed at our current speed.

[There is no fun if the game is too easy.]

Of course, this was a story for when there were no variables.

[The scenario difficulty has been adjusted.]

[Scenario difficulty: E -> D]

The sound of the dokkaebi’s laughter was heard.

[Is there any fun if you just run away? Let’s create a bit of atmosphere!]

[The evil thoughts of the dead have returned.]  
[The surrounding earth is filled with black ether.]  
[The demonic people have woken up!]

There was the sound of something chasing us from behind. Yoo Sangah muttered to herself.

“Z-Zombies?”

Zombie-like bodies were coming in huge waves. Some of them were people from the same carriage as us.

“We just need to go a little further! Quickly!”

The distance to the ichthyosaur was now less than a hundred metres. Fortunately, Lee Hyunsung carried Lee Gilyoung and had crossed the safety line. The problem was the rest of us, including me. Han Myungoh shrieked.

“Y-You bastards!”

There were too many demonic people. If there were only corpses from the subway, we might’ve gotten away. The problem was...

“Kuweeeeooh!”

The drivers who died on the bridge became demonic people. The path that Lee Hyunsung broke through was covered with demonic people. I looked between the demonic people on the road and the approaching ichthyosaur.

“...Everybody get down.”

It was too late.

*Kwaaaaang!*

The legs of the bridge shook tremendously as the ichthyosaur’s huge mouth bit it.

The scales of the ichthyosaur shone through the dust that poured down onto Han River like rain. A fishy smell of blood and water filled the area.

I staggered and raised my body.

Once the dust went away, the scenery around me was clear. Piles of shattered concrete and cut steel. The carcasses of the demonic people which the ichthyosaur had cleanly bitten through.

The broken leg of the bridge.

“...Dok... sii... kay?”

Yoo Sangah and Han Myungoh raised their bodies from a little further away.

One of Han Myungoh’s legs seemed injured and uncomfortable from the previous quake.

Lee Hyunsung and Lee Gilyoung cried out from across the bridge but their voices seemed blocked by the safety zone.

What should I do? I made plans on the basis of the bridge breaking. But I hadn’t expected Han Myungoh and Yoo Sangah to be with me.

At that moment, a voice was heard in the air.

[Someone has received the favour of a constellation.]

[The constellation’s scenario ‘Deus Ex Machina’ has been activated.]

Along with the voice, a brilliant bridge made of light was created among the remnants of the broken Dongho Bridge. Then a message floated in front of me.

+

[Deus Ex Machina – Even Bridge]

Description: A bridge of light made by a constellation. Only an ‘even’ number of people can cross the bridge. The bridge will disappear as soon as an ‘odd’ number of people tries to cross it.

+

“Dokja-ssi. This, in my head, suddenly—”

I met the eyes of Yoo Sangah, who was talking nonsense. I could roughly guess the situation.

Deus Ex Machina. Constellations risked a huge loss by intervening in scenarios.

“...It is Yoo Sangah-ssi’s sponsor.”

I didn’t know what constellation it was but somebody had chosen Yoo Sangah as their incarnation and wanted her to live.

Deus Ex Machine was a rare phenomenon in Ways of Survival. And Yoo Sangah was a person who should’ve already died.

I had a moment of doubt. What type of constellation was behind Yoo Sangah?

[The information of this person can’t be read in ‘Character List.’]

[This person isn’t registered in ‘Character List.’]

I was a bit surprised.

I couldn’t see her with my skill? Why? Did she have a special background? Or did she have a mental barrier? But if she had something like that from the beginning... no, wait a minute. Perhaps this was...

“Dokja-ssi, what do we do now?”

I heard Yoo Sangah’s bewildered voice. I didn’t have much time to think.

*Ku ku ku ku!*

The Han River was swirling. The ichthyosaur had eaten one bridge leg and was turning its huge body around on the other side of Han River. I bit my lips and once again read the explanation of the bridge.

Only an ‘even’ number of people could cross the bridge.

In the end, ‘Deus Ex Machina’ was a toy made by the damn constellations who loved tragedies.

There was no way for everyone to survive.

Han Myungoh’s body was shaking as his eyes met mine.

In the end, somebody must die.

# Chapter 9

## Protagonist (4)

At this moment, Yoo Sangah shouted.

“Dokja-ssi! Behind you!”

I reflexively leaned forward as a bloody fist came flying through the air. It was a familiar fist covered with energy.

I felt something falling towards me and instinctively kicked out. I didn't need to look back to know what was behind me.

A grade 9 human type, demonic person. Human mutants infected with black ether.

That's why demonic people were classified as a high-risk species, despite being grade 9. Demonic people made from a normal human base were no different from zombies, but it was particularly dangerous if their hosts were different.

I saw the badge of the school student with a damaged head.

“...Kim Namwoon.”

The guy whose head burst a few minutes ago was now aiming for me as a demonic person.

Kim Namwoon's vocal cords that burst out were in a bizarre shape.

“Kuweeeoooh.”

[Exclusive skill, Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint Lv. 1 has been activated!]

[This person doesn't have any consciousness. The skill Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint will be cancelled.]

Damn, it was as expected.

*Chwaack!*

My thigh was scratched by Kim Namwoon's overgrown black fingernails.

A pain that felt like a burn spread through my leg. The skin which hadn't been cut by a knife was now torn by fingernails.

This was the main reason why demonic people were dangerous. The demonic people became several times stronger than when they were human.

"Yoo Sangah-ssi, immediately—"

I felt something as I spoke. Without looking back, I could see what was going on.

"Let me go! Let go! Dokja-ssi! Dokja-ssi!"

Han Myungoh, who had just been limping, was carrying Yoo Sangah over one shoulder and moving across the bridge at an astonishing rate.

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' admires how easy you are to fool.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is impressed with your sacrifice.]

[100 coins have been sponsored.]

...Indeed. Planning to leave me?

By the way, the way he was running was a little strange. Despite being on one leg, he was running as fast as an Olympic athlete.

This couldn't be the exclusive skill of Han Myungoh, who had a big belly. Therefore, it must be the stigma of his sponsor.

[The One-legged Swift Horse]

And I already knew the constellation who provided that stigma. I used Character List on the distant Han Myungoh.

[The information of this person can't be read in 'Character List.']

Once again, Character List didn't work properly.

If I remembered correctly, the stigma of ‘One-legged Swift Horse’ came from the constellation *Lame Trickster*.

*Lame Trickster* didn’t give any stigmas in the mental barrier system. In addition, Han Myungoh couldn’t possess such a skill from the beginning. In other words, my skill failed not because of Han Myungoh’s ability.

...I was stupid.

I looked at the message window floating in front of me and laughed.

[This person isn’t registered in ‘Character List.’]

I was thinking too hard when it meant literally that. Character List literally read the information of characters.

Yoo Sangah and Han Myungoh were characters who didn’t originally appear in *Ways of Destruction*. They were people who would’ve died if I hadn’t saved them. It was natural that I couldn’t confirm their information with Character List.

“Gruk! Gruk! Gruk!”

On one side, the incoming Kim Namwoon and demonic people were jabbering nonsense at me. On the other side, Han Myungoh had already halfway crossed the bridge. Lee Hyunsung and Lee Gilyoung had already entered the safety zone across the bridge so I couldn’t ask for help from them.

This was truly a predicament. I couldn’t cross the bridge alone.

My brain moved quickly.

Should I capture one of the demonic people and cross the bridge? It was worth trying, but the success rate was too low. Unlike the name, the demonic people were categorized as non-human, meaning they didn’t count as a person.

“Kuaaaack!”

Several demonic people lost their balance and fell down the bridge.

*Kwajijjik!*

The fallen demonic people became the food of the ichthyosaurs. Like piranhas, the ichthyosaurs broke the demonic people into dozens of pieces in an instant.

Distant fear came flooding back in. If the number of people on the bridge became 'odd' for even a moment, I would be like them. It was impossible to cross alone.

Then?

"...Let's take it slow."

I muttered as I attempted to control myself. Right now, I needed to remain calm. There were still a few usable methods, but the important thing was to handle matters in front of me. I controlled my breathing and walked to the demonic people.

"Kuweeok?"

Fortunately, it wasn't difficult to make the fall down the bridge using inertia.

*Kyaaaack – kwajjik!*

I reduced the numbers by making them fall steadily. The dokkaebi's stopwatch floating in the air was blinking.

The time remaining before the scenario ended was 15 minutes.

"Sigh..."

Nails flew from a blind spot and pierced my shoulder bone. No matter how calm my mind, no matter how much information I knew, I couldn't help my untrained body.

"Kuwoooooook!"

The wild Kim Namwoon's attacks were becoming increasingly faster.

Left shoulder.

The right thigh.

The top of the head.

I had to break the flow. I barely avoided the flying fingernails and kicked his legs.

“Kyah?”

But this person lost all senses and wasn't hurt at all. I stepped back, hitting a broken steel frame. I could hear the raging sound of the ichthyosaurs at the bottom of the pillars.

[A few constellations are rejoicing in your adversity.]

[The constellations have sponsored you 200 coins.]

It was a steady accumulation of coins. Now I held 5,000 coins. It was a significant number of coins for the beginning.

[Wow, you are quite good at surviving. Now now! Will any constellations help this poor friend?]

It was the dokkaebi's merchant-like voice. I wanted to tear it apart.

[Geez, there is really nobody?]

Of course.

It would be strange for a constellation to support me after what happened during the Sponsor Selection.

[What did I say? You should've chosen well when you had the change. How pitiful.]

Kim Namwoon attacked me again and again, resulting in damage to my waist.

Of course, I also injured Kim Namwoon's left side with the knife. Thanks to that, his stomach was hanging out like a skipping rope.

In order to kill a demonic person, I had to completely destroy the heart. But the skin of a demonic person was hardest near the heart. The Swiss knife wasn't able to pierce it with sharpness alone.

Dammit, it wouldn't be so hard if I had just one combat skill.

[The exclusive skill 'Bookmark' is activated.]

...Bookmark?

[‘Character Bookmarks’ is activated.]

[Available Bookmark Slots: 3]

[Bringing up the list of available bookmarks.]

[People Listed in the Bookmark Slots]

1. The Delusion Demon Kim Namwoon (Understanding 25).
2. Steel Sword Lee Hyunsung (Understanding 35).
3. Empty slot.

Bookmark. I’ve read over 3,000 chapters of Ways of Survival and I never saw this skill name before. But I intuitively knew how to use it.

“Activate bookmark number one.”

There was the feelings of pages turning in my head. It was the scenes of Kim Namwoon in Ways of Destruction.

{Hahahahat! I’m full of strength!}

{Die! Die! Die! Die!}

{A new world requires new laws.}

Kim Namwoon’s memories crowded in and all of my muscle nerves started to tense up. The power of another person was spiking within me.

[The number one bookmark has been activated.]

[The level of the Bookmark skill is low, shortening the activation time.]

[Activation Time: One minute.]

One minute. That was enough.

[Your understanding of the character is low, so only a part of the character’s skill is activated.]

[Blackening Lv.1 has been activated.]

Kim Namwoon was breathing roughly as he rushed towards me. His body was covered with a black energy that was threatening me.

I firmly placed strength on the heels of my feet and rushed towards Kim Namwoon. If we had the same skill, I absolutely wouldn't lose.

At this moment, I really was Kim Namwoon. I was the crazy killer who ruled the world of 'Ways of Survival' with the protagonist.

In a situation where Blackening was properly played, the Delusion Demon of the battlefield couldn't be easily beaten.

"Kyaaaack!"

The Swiss knife cut through uncomfortable sensations. It tore through muscles and flesh.

From the upper left arm to the heart. There was the sound of a whole human being cut up as Kim Namwoon staggered. If he still had eyes, he would be glaring at me right now.

"Kuoh, kill. Ohhh. D.i.e"

The young man who felt pessimistic towards the world and dreamt of breaking away from it. If Ways of Survival hadn't started, he might've gone to university after sitting his CSAT and enjoyed campus life.

"...Don't, want... to... die"

I watched Kim Namwoon falling down the bridge without saying farewell. Despite him being a hated figure, I couldn't help feeling strange emotions.

[Your understanding of the character 'Kim Namwoon' has increased.]

[The number one bookmark has been disabled.]

A surge of fatigue overcame me as the power went away.

It was hard. Really.

"Kuwoooooook!"

There was 10 minutes remaining. There were still many demonic people moving about.

It was unreasonable to take on so many even with Lv. 10 stamina. But from the beginning, I had no intention of taking care of them alone.

It was a little late. He should appear around now.

*Kwajik! Kwajijik!*

There was a crackling sound like he had been waiting. I knew it. I thought he would do reckless things in order to gain achievements and donations.

*Kwajijik! Crunch.*

It was obviously the sound of a person's flesh colliding with another body, but it sounded more like a mace crushing flesh.

In fact, I had collected this much coins and thought it would be worth challenging the protagonist.

But now I realized how mistaken I was.

From the stationary train, the demonic people were thrown away in a straight line, as if a tank had rushed through. Was this really a scene caused by a 'human'?

"Kyaack?"

The headless demonic people realized that something was strange and started turning around. However, it was too late.

*Kwajijik!*

The man destroyed all the demonic people threatening me and appeared in front of me. An overwhelming force without any weapons. He beat the demonic people with only two fists.

I had prepared my mind in advance but sweat still flowed down my back.

Dealing with this guy? It was absolutely impossible. I couldn't win even if my overall stats rose by more than double what they were now.

"You, who are you?"

The man's cool gaze turned to me. I reflexively turned on Character List in order to overcome the fear.

[The exclusive skill, Character List is activated.]

[There is too much information about this person. Character List is converted to Summary List.]

[Character Summary]

Name: Yoo Jonghyuk.

Attribute: Regressor (3rd turn) (Myth), Pro Gamer (Rare)

Exclusive Skills: Sage's Eyes Lv. 8, Hand to Hand Combat Lv. 8, Weapons Training Lv. 8, Mental Barrier Lv. 5, Crowd Control Lv. 5, Reasoning Lv. 5, Lie Detection Lv. 4...

The list of exclusive skills continued endlessly. Before I could get to the end of the list, a rugged hand appeared and grabbed my neck.

"You, how the hell are you alive?"

The 'first way' to survive in a ruined world. The one who proved that method was right in front of me.

Regressor Yoo Jonghyuk. The grand tragedy of this world began with this person.

# Chapter 10

## Protagonist (5)

It would be quite a ludicrous sight if anyone else saw it. A large adult man was being grabbed by the neck and hanging like a monkey.

I could see Lee Hyunsung looking this way from across the bridge. His expression was anxious but he couldn't actually see what was going on here. It was due to the safety ward. I could see over there but they couldn't see here.

"Name."

"What?"

"What is your name?"

Look at this indifferent way of talking, just like a main character. But it wasn't good to provoke him here.

"Kim Dokja."

"A strange name."

"I've heard that a lot."

At this moment, my stomach sank in and felt turned inside out as Yoo Jonghyuk's fist hit it.

"...Ugh."

Despite having skin that a knife bounced off, the attack was very painful.

"You have a solid body. Have you already mastered the use of coins?"

"It is the same with you..."

*Bam.* There was a hit to my stomach again. I barely managed to swallow back a groan.

This guy, the level of his strength was at least 15. It was at this scale despite only one main and one sub scenario occurring. Indeed, natural born monsters were different.

“Stop the unnecessary answer. Only answer what I ask from now on. Understood?”

I didn’t answer. I thought maybe this might happen. However, this was the worst situation that I desperately hoped would never happen.

In the beginning, Yoo Jonghyuk was more intimidating than any other figure.

His personality had worn out after going through regression three times. His principles were cut away in order to maintain his sense of self. The current Yoo Jonghyuk would never hesitate for the sake of his purpose.

“Your answer?”

“...I will.”

“Use honorifics.”

“What if I don’t want to?”

This time, I raised both hands to block the fist. The pain felt like my bones had broken but the shock was dissipated. Yoo Jonghyuk’s eyes widened like he was a bit surprised.

[The character ‘Yoo Jonghyuk’ is on guard against you.]

Then it didn’t matter. I wasn’t going to be a punching bag just because he was the main character.

“I’m sorry but you are younger than me, pro gamer Yoo Jonghyuk-ssi. Therefore, you should be the one using honorifics.”

“...You know me?”

“I know. I am the employee of a game company.”

It was a lie. Even if I worked for a game company, it was impossible to memorize the

names of all professional gamers. In addition, until recently, 'Yoo Jonghyuk' was just a character in a novel.

"You are famous. At one time, I was a fan."

Being famous was just a setting of the plot. However, it wasn't a lie that I was a 'fan.'

I liked, hated, grumbled and cheered Yoo Jonghyuk on. That's why I stuck with Yoo Jonghyuk for over 3,000 chapters.

"Fan. I haven't heard that in a long time."

Yoo Jonghyuk had a look of nostalgia in his eyes, like he was locked in his memories. However, it was only for a moment.

"I'll forgive your impudence this time. But your situation hasn't changed."

"I can see that."

I looked down at my two legs swaying over a blank space.

"I have only one thing I want to ask."

"Ask."

"How did you survive on the subway?"

It was the question I expected.

"Will you spare me if I answer?"

"I'll see."

It was a lie. I could tell just by looking at his face. I was the only reader of Ways of Survival. Numerous possible repertoires were simulated in my head. What could I say to convince this damn regressor?

[Your understanding of the character 'Yoo Jonghyuk' is increasing.]

[Your understanding of this person is already very high.]

...Huh?

[The conditions of use for the exclusive skill 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint' stage 2 has been reached!]

[Do you want to activate the exclusive skill?]

Then after a moment, I was able to read someone's thoughts like a waterfall in my head.

{Only Lee Hyunsung and Kim Namwoon should've survived in that carriage.}

{Yet Kim Namwoon died and the others survived.}

{How did you survive?}

{Who the hell is this guy?}

{Dig up information. Then if I find any disturbing elements... Kill.}

A dense flicker of thoughts.

It was obviously a crisis situation but I couldn't prevent the corners of my mouth from going up.

The time remaining until the scenario ended was 5 minutes.

I started the story. I told the story using as much concise, short and accurate vocabulary as possible.

It was from the first moment the 'dokkaebi' appeared in the subway to the end of the first scenario. Of course, I excluded the skills I got and any important issues.

"...You cleared the scenario by killing insects?"

"We were lucky."

Yoo Jonghyuk was so surprised he seemed to have forgotten that his mouth was open.

{The future has completely changed.}

He was shocked. Originally, the people in carriage 3807 would kill each other in a battle royale, with only Lee Hyunsung and Kim Namwoon surviving.

“You have keen eyes. How did you know there were insects in the carriage?”

Killing Intent filled Yoo Jonghyuk’s eyes as thoughts brushed through my head.

{Is this guy also a regressor?}

{If so, I have to kill him right now.}

A person who commits a fault thinks that everyone speaks of it.

I wasn’t surprised that he misunderstood me. I quickly opened my mouth.

“An explosion.”

“Explosion?”

“I was able to find an insect due to an explosion from the carriage in front.”

Yoo Jonghyuk’s body stopped at these words.

“Explain it in a simpler manner.”

“When the explosion occurred, a kid fell and dropped his insect collecting net. I picked it up by chance.”

“...It is a suspicious coincidence.”

“Coincidences are always suspicious. If you don’t believe me, ask the people beyond the ward. The boy standing there dropped the net.”

Beyond the safety barrier on the way to Oksu Station, people were looking over at this side. The scenario wasn’t over yet so they couldn’t approach or talk to us.

Yoo Jonghyuk looked over but showed no signs of moving. His eyes changed and memories that seemed to belong to Yoo Jonghyuk crossed my mind.

{I see.}

{Explosion.}

{This guy isn't a regressor.}

{He isn't the one who changed the future. Rather, the future changed... }

{Because of me.}

I saw people dying painfully in a powerful explosion and Yoo Jonghyuk blankly watching it.

{It is because I started killing them, unlike the other turns.}

Due to the impact of Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint, I could feel Yoo Jonghyuk's mental pain and suffering.

"Are your questions over?"

"...Yes."

"Then can you let me go? And let's go to Oksu together. There isn't much time remaining to clear the scenario."

'It is difficult.'

However, a protagonist was a protagonist for a reason.

"Everything you said makes perfect sense."

I have never seen a protagonist as careful as Yoo Jonghyuk.

{A beginner can't be so calm.}

{He is abnormally well-adjusted to this changed world.}

{He probably killed Kim Namwoon.}

{He has gone beyond being useful to being dangerous.}

Yoo Jonghyuk's right eye started shining with a gold colour. I quickly realized what he

was doing. In fact, it would be weird if this guy didn't use 'that.'

Sage's Eyes. Yoo Jonghyuk's strongest detection skill. Sage's Eyes was the SS-grade skill that showed the target's attributes window as well as hidden information.

As long as he used it, I couldn't avoid revealing my identity. On the other hand, I thought it was a good thing.

I still didn't know my 'attribute' and 'skills'. If Yoo Jonghyuk discovered my information, I would also be able to know about myself. Then hopefully, I would be able to use the information I learned to escape this situation.

[The exclusive skill, 'Fourth Wall' is activated!]

[Fourth Wall has detected the use of the detection skill Sage's Eyes!]

Sparks flew in the air and Yoo Jonghyuk's body staggered.

{... Kuk, what?}

Yoo Jonghyuk covered his right eye and watched me with confusion.

"You... what is your identity?"

I'm sorry but I was wondering the same thing.

[The exclusive skill Fourth Wall has blocked Sage's Eyes!]

I didn't know that I had a skill that would defend against Sage's Eyes. After Bookmark, it was Fourth Wall.

This complicated things. Yoo Jonghyuk wouldn't believe me now.

{I must kill him here.}

He was a person who didn't trust what he didn't know.

"Yoo Jonghyuk."

Then I also need to change plans.

“You need a reliable companion.”

“...What do you mean?”

“You can’t break through the 46th scenario alone. Shouldn’t you be well aware of it?”

Yoo Jonghyuk’s eyes narrowed.

“How do you know this? Perhaps you—”

“It doesn’t matter how I am.”

I stared straight into Yoo Jonghyuk’s eyes and said.

“The important thing is that I can help you.”

{He isn’t a regressor. If he was a regressor, I wouldn’t be unaware of him.}

{Then who is this person?}

{... Perhaps?}

If I couldn’t hide my hand and if I didn’t possess the best hand, then there was only one way out. It was to show a hand that would make the other person misunderstand.

“Yoo Jonghyuk, I know the future that you don’t know.”

[The character ‘Yoo Jonghyuk’ has used the ‘Lie Detection’ skill.

[Lie Detection has confirmed that your words are the truth.]

Yoo Jonghyuk’s eyes slowly widened.

“...How?”

“How else?”

{No way. There was a prophet other than Anna Croft? It is also in South Korea?}

Prophet. In Ways of Survival, it was the only attribute that could see the future and

had the passive of ‘nullifying all detection skills.’ In fact, only one person had the attribute of ‘prophet’ in the world of Ways of Survival.

{Only a prophet can defend against my Sage’s Eyes.}

I didn’t answer and Yoo Jonghyuk bit his lips.

“Can you perhaps use ‘Future Sight’?”

“It is something similar.”

“You knew I would come here.”

“Yes.”

{I see. If this man is a prophet, all his actions are convincing.}

The flow was changing. Yoo Jonghyuk’s fluctuation was conveyed straight away. This was the only chance.

“I know that Yoo Jonghyuk has special powers. You also know things about the future. Isn’t that right?”

“...”

“But that knowledge is never perfect.”

The only weakness of a regressor.

It meant that the future changed when they used their information of the future. In other words, all those who regressed would eventually live in a ‘world they don’t know.’

“Make me your companion. I can fill in the parts you are missing.”

There was no companion as good as a ‘prophet’ to the present Yoo Jonghyuk. In fact, my present self could play a role similar to a prophet. It was because I was the only reader of this story.

[There is one minute to the end of the scenario.]

Yoo Jonghyuk bowed his head and started to think.

{A prophet will certainly be helpful.}

[There are 50 seconds left to complete the scenario.]

{Not just the 46th scenario, but later when fighting the ‘chalatustra.’ But... can I really believe him?}

[There are 40 seconds left to the end of the scenario.]

{Companion.}

Finally, Yoo Jonghyuk raised his head as I stared at the clock with an irritated heart.

“I have decided. I will make you my companion.”

[Excessive immersion has severely worn out your mental strength.]

[Exclusive skill, Omniscient Reader’s Viewpoint has been turned off.]

I wasn’t sure if it was due to fatigue or relief but the exclusive skill was released. Now Yoo Jonghyuk’s face was as difficult as a philosophy book with no commentary written.

Yoo Jonghyuk started to take me across the ‘Even Bridge.’ Of course, I was still held by the collar but... I thought things would be all right now. I persuaded this damn regressor and was in a good position.

We had almost crossed the Even Bridge and were right in front of the safe area when Yoo Jonghyuk suddenly stopped.

“I will ask you one last thing.”

“What?”

“If you are really a prophet, you should know your future. Isn’t that right?”

The moment I saw Yoo Jonghyuk’s serene eyes, goosebumps broke out. His test wasn’t over yet. The grip holding my collar tightened.

“Keok.”

His hand raised me up a little bit and a gentle wind passed by my feet. Underneath me was completely empty.

The smell of blood mixed in with the smell of Han River as the ichthyosaurs jumped towards their prey with open mouths.

“Will I let go of this hand or won’t I?”

For the first time, I started sweating. Let me think. Even without his thoughts, I knew this guy more than anyone else. I closed my eyes and thought about Yoo Jonghyuk.

[There are 20 seconds left to the end of the scenario.]

Then I came to a conclusion.

“Yoo Jonghyuk.”

I was certain about what he would do. No matter how I thought about it, there was no other ending when it came to Yoo Jonghyuk.

I talked as I watched a sea commander approaching in the water.

“I will tell you two things first.”

“...What?”

“One, I’m not your subordinate. So I hope you will treat me fairly from now on.”

“...”

“Two, I will cooperate with you but you also have to promise to cooperate with me.”

Yoo Jonghyuk looked at me with interest and nodded.

“Well, what is your answer?”

I replied with a smile.

“Get your hand off me and get lost, you damn jerk.”

Then the power holding me disappeared. I was grabbed by the force of gravity. I saw Yoo Jonghyuk's face as I was falling. Yoo Jonghyuk was smiling brightly like something made him happy.

Son of a bitch.

"I believe you. You are definitely a prophet."

Waiting for me at my crash point was the mouth of the giant sea commander.

I closed my eyes from the shock of the impact along with the cold water of Han River. As I sucked in a breath, a warm and enormous darkness swallowed me up.

[You have failed to clear the scenario.]

...Damn, I have to use that method after all.

# Chapter 11

## Contract (1)

My body suddenly became heavy as I felt water entering my lungs. Then I was sucked in somewhere. I wasn't torn apart because I fell with perfect timing. However, I couldn't lose consciousness here.

I had to stay awake. I needed to wait for a while.

I somehow managed to curl up and hold my breath. 10 seconds, 20 seconds, 30 seconds... I was barely breathing when my hands hit a tangible wall in the darkness.

"U-Uwek."

I could barely breathe after coughing up the river water several times. My level 10 stamina saved me from being killed by hitting the water surface, but the large and small bruises all over my body were very painful.

I controlled my breathing in order to not fall into a panic and turned on my smartphone.

I was worried it might've broken in the fall but the power was fortunately okay. It was good that I spent big and bought a smartphone with a waterproof function.

*Pahat.*

The flashlight turned on and the surrounding scenery entered my eyes. There were huge walls with concrete by-products floating by. The stomach of an ichthyosaur was more disgusting than I thought.

"Dammit."

Yoo Jonghyuk's expression as he let go of his hand without hesitation and got off the bridge was vivid. I expected it but it was more shocking than I thought.

...If I wanted to be his companion, I had to survive.

It wasn't that I didn't understand.

Companion. The weight of this word was too great for Yoo Jonghyuk. Since his failure in the first round of regression, Yoo Jonghyuk had never made a real 'companion.'

It was rare for humans to easily follow the growth of a regressor. As a result, he solved everything alone, was revered as a savior and was naturally lonely.

To Yoo Jonghyuk, 'humans' were only subordinates or enemies.

Thus, this was a test. If I wanted to be in an equal position with him, I had to solve this much alone.

...Well, this was when looking at it from Yoo Jonghyuk's viewpoint.

"A companion like you... crazy psychopath."

I barely doggy paddled to a floating styrofoam panel and raised my body onto it. Thanks to the warmth of the stomach, I wasn't cold. However, the problem was from now on.

I closed my eyes and played the message log that I heard.

[You have failed to clear the scenario.]

[Paid settlement will begin.]

[100 coins have been reduced for the channel usage fee.]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' has nodded at your exciting remarks.]

[100 coins have been sponsored.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' nods are your choice.]

[100 coins have been sponsored.]

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' is disappointed in your rash remarks.]

There were quite a few messages. In addition, a few exposed constellations sponsored me. Maybe it was due to the final conversation between Yoo Jonghyuk and I.

I felt a little down as I read through the messages of the constellations one by one and collected the coins. If I had picked one of these constellations in the first Sponsor Selection, this might not have happened.

But there was no regret in my choice.

After encountering Yoo Jonghyuk directly, I was certain.

The Great Sage the Equal of Heaven might be a sponsor of the highest quality but he wasn't enough. I needed more than just 'sponsorship' if I wanted to confront Yoo Jonghyuk.

And I would gain it from here.

The walls of the stomach growled and small waves rose inside. The sea commander seemed to be moving somewhere. I turned on my smartphone and calculated the time.

According to Ways of Survival, the ichthyosaur started to secrete stomach acid around three hours after ingesting food.

In other words, I didn't have much time left.

[Haha, it is sad that things turned out like this. It was very interesting.]

There was a sound effect before the dokkaebi's voice was heard.

"...Dokkaebi?"

[Yes, that's right. You don't seem panicked at all?]

"I knew you would come."

[Hrmm. It sounds like you were waiting for me?]

"Of course I have been waiting."

Light turned on and the dokkaebi appeared. I couldn't tell for sure from his expression alone, but this guy was clearly interested.

I deliberately spoke calmly. If I was pushed here, I wouldn't be able to eat my meal.

"Are you going to take coins from me?"

[...Coins?]

“You have to take coins in exchange for me failing the scenario.”

[Hmm, not your life?]

“If it was my life, you would have written ‘death’ in the failure results column, not three question marks. Doesn’t this mean there is room to negotiation?”

[...Hahaha. How interesting.]

In fact, there was a loophole in my words. The scenario message was ‘Failure: ???’. This literally meant that the penalty of failure was unknown. It was just my assumption that it was in exchange for coins. Nevertheless, there was a reason why I was so certain.

“Am I wrong?”

It was because I already knew about this scenario. The dokkaebi hesitated for a moment before nodding.

[You are right. Amazing. That you could determine this point with such a clue... as expected from someone who is attraction the constellations’ attention.]

The dokkaebi’s tone was filled with sincere admiration.

[As you said, you can survive this sub scenario if you pay coins, even if you fail.]

“How much?”

[Pay 5,100 coins. Then I will let you live.]

I looked at how many coins I currently possessed.

[Coins Possessed: 5,100 C]

I couldn’t help smiling. This jerk was messing around right now.

“That is too much.”

[Haha, then won’t you die? It is up to me to accept the coins or not. If you do something wrong then I can just end it here.]

“Then kill me.”

[...Huh?]

“Kill me.”

[.....]

“You can’t kill me?”

The dokkaebi didn’t move. It was natural. He was having a lot of fun with me right now. Furthermore, he wouldn’t have come down here to see me if he had been planning to kill me. For this guy, I had to survive here or I at least had to die miserably.

[Haha. You are really making me angry. Look, now...]

The dokkaebi’s flat-shaped eyebrows wriggled furiously. It was time to stop the taunts and get to the main point.

“Low-grade dokkaebi, Bihyung. How are the activities of a streamer?”

If there was a crack in the face, it would look exactly like this. Dokkaebi Bihyung showed confusion for the first time.

[H-How do you know my name?]

“You haven’t been enjoying broadcasting lately, right? The constellations are too stingy.”

[W-Who the hell are you? How does a human...]

Bihyung’s horns shook. It was natural. An ordinary human couldn’t know about the Star Stream system. But I wasn’t an ordinary human.

[A few constellations have doubts about your existence.]

[The constellation Secretive Plotter’s eyes are shining at your plan.]

From now on, it wasn’t a story for the constellations.

I mouthed to Bihyung, “How about we talk after you close the channel?”

Bihyung was worried and closed the channel.

[#BI-7623 channel is closed.]

Once the constellations left the channel, Bihyung showed his true colours.

[Feel free to speak. You, how can an ordinary human know about the Star Stream broadcasting?]

“That isn’t important.”

[Huh?]

“Bihyung, do you want to be ‘king of the dokkaebis’?”

[What now—]

“Don’t you wish to be the best streamer in the network, surpassing Dokgak and Gildal?”

Bihyung’s complexion was changing.

“Dokkaebi Bihyung, sign a contract with me. Then I will make you the king of the dokkaebis.”

# Chapter 12

## Contract (2)

Star Stream system.

The star stream broadcasting was designed to relay its contents to the entire universe.

The subscribers were constellations at the top of the distant galaxies. The actors were humans like me. And the storyteller that connected the two sides was the dokkaebi in front of me.

[Ha, hahahahat! You are crazy! A crazy human! I should've known it when you refused to sponsoring of the other constellations!]

Bihyung laughed for a long time before opening his mouth again.

[I don't know how you know about Star Stream Broadcasting but I can't accept the offer. I'm a dokkaebi, not a constellation. I can't be your sponsor.]

"You seem to have misunderstood. I never told you to sponsor me."

[Huh?]

"I am well aware that you are a weak dokkaebi. I don't need your strength. I need your channel."

[My channel?]

"Since you can't seem to understand me, is there a problem with your Korean language patch?"

[No, what is this?]

"I will explain it simply. I want to sign an exclusive contract with your channel."

Bihyung made a blank expression before belatedly regained his spirit.

[Wait a minute. Do you want to make a 'stream contract' with me now?]

"Yes."

A stream contract was originally a contract between dokkaebi and constellations.

The constellation's incarnation would appear on a particular channel and the dokkaebi would receive a portion of the coins earned by the incarnation of the constellation as a commission.

Originally, the person who was the incarnation couldn't intervene in this contract. It was called sponsorship but the contracted incarnation was nothing but a slave.

[Hahat, this is a hit.]

Bihyung laughed behind small fingers. The surrounding atmosphere was changing.

[I don't know how you know about such things but some human dares to mention the stream contract? It is also a trivial buy with no sponsor?]

The tone changed and the surrounding air was filled with killing intent. Indeed, even a low level dokkaebi was strong compared to humans. But it wasn't enough to make me back off.

"It is worth signing a contract because I have no sponsor."

[...What?]

"What do you think the purpose of a constellation is to enter a channel?"

Bihyung looked like a bad student at the sudden question. From now on, it was a special lecture time for the low level dokkaebi.

"You don't have to be so nervous. You already know this information. But let's review it again to see what it means."

Bihyung was caught in my pace and nodded despite himself.

"The Star Stream subscribers can be largely divided into two groups. One group are the 'fun seekers' who seek to relieve their boredom with the channel. The other group

are the ‘incarnation searchers’ who want to find an incarnation to contract with them. Isn’t that right?”

[Yes. That’s right.]

“For this reason, you must be able to satisfy one of the two groups in order to become a famous channel in Star Stream. In other words, either stick to the fun seekers or the incarnation seekers. You have to attract one of them properly.”

[You are moderately well informed. But so what? What does this contract have to do with why constellations subscribe?]

“I don’t know how many more hints I have to give you. This is why your subscribers number still isn’t over three digits.”

[...Shut up. Say it quickly.]

Seeing Bihyung thrust his small horns at me cutely, it was hard to believe the dokkaebi had blown up people’s head a while ago. Now let’s stop making fun of him and take a chance.

“What if there is a channel that can satisfy both the fun seekers and the incarnation searchers?”

[What are you saying? Such a thing is impossible. Even if it is possible, it is only for a while.]

Bihyung’s words were correct.

The reason why it was impossible to satisfy all the constellations was due to the characteristics of the ‘incarnation searchers’ group.

The purpose of these constellations was to ‘discover an incarnation.’ They changed channels as soon as the Sponsor Selection was over. Due to this, the incarnation searchers group were just temporary customers. But.

“That is a story for when the Sponsor Selection proceeds normally.”

[What?]

“What if there is an incarnation who doesn’t sign a contract with any constellation? And what if that incarnation shows an ability that transcends all over incarnations with sponsors?”

The existence of a strong incarnation would attract the eyes of the constellations. If this incarnation continued to not select a sponsor, the ‘incarnation searchers’ group would continue to subscribe without leaving the channel.

[W-Wait a minute! You, is this why you didn’t select a sponsor...?]

“Yes, that’s right.”

[Ha... this is interesting.]

Bihyung grinned at me.

[Becoming the strongest incarnation without a sponsor... if there is such a thing, it certainly wouldn’t be a dream to become the best Star Stream channel. But such an incarnation can’t exist.]

“Do you really think so?”

[...I admit that you aren’t normal. You have attracted the attention of constellations from the beginning and thanks to it, I have also been having fun. However, there is a limit to your delusions. Haven’t you noticed it after going through that? An ordinary human can never beat an incarnation. That is the law of the world.]

“I don’t know that.”

[You have already missed the opportunity. Look around you. This isn’t a main scenario. You failed a sub scenario and now your life is at risk. There are no constellations watching you—]

“Really?”

[.....?]

“By now, the constellations must be in an uproar. Aren’t they? Isn’t everybody clamoring for the channel to quickly be opened?”

Bihyung was silent.

“Aren’t they all going crazy with curiosity right now? Who is that crazy person who went against the regressor? Is he really a prophet? Can he really see the future? If he can see the future, what did he get eaten by the ichthyosaur?”

[S-Stop! You are...]

“From now on, I’m going to show it. So shut up and do what I tell you. Do you want to become the king of dokkaebis?”

Bihyung’s gaze towards me was changing. I could hear the sound of him gulping.

Bihyung was worrying. In any case, there was nothing to lose if he believed me here. Then? Bihyung’s pupils moved quickly.

[Then let’s settle the scenario failure first. Give me 5,100 coins...]

“What are you saying? I didn’t fail.”

[...Eh?]

“Maybe by now I would’ve met the conditions...”

I loosened my body and got up from my seat. My cold body was stiff. Bihyung still had a stupid expression on his face.

“Open the channel. It will start soon.”

[Start, what will—]

Then a message was heard in the air.

[The hidden scenario has arrived!]

+

[Hidden Scenario – Commander Slayer]

Category: Hidden

Difficulty: A+

Clear Conditions: Kill the ichthyosaur ‘sea commander’ and escape from its stomach.

Time Limit: 10 days  
Compensation: 9,000 coins  
Failure: Death  
+

“Look, didn’t I tell you to be prepared?”

There were three types of scenarios in Ways of Survival. The main scenario was in charge of progressing the main story. The sub scenarios were responsible for minor events. And the hidden scenarios were only opened through special conditions.

[How on earth...?]

Bihyung’s lips were shaking with shock.

Unlike the main scenarios and sub scenarios that a dokkaebi was in charge of, the hidden scenarios were characterized by their automatic appearance when certain conditions were met.

“You didn’t even know. You low grade dokkaebi.”

[You... what on earth?]

“Anyway, if I can clear this, I will prove that I have the ability for the contract, right?”

Bihyung watched the scenario screen with gloomy eyes. He looked at me with a careful gaze and asked.

[This scenario, the difficulty is A+. Do you really believe you can clear it?]

“Yes.”

There was a small wave as the Han River water crashed against the wall of the ichthyosaur’s stomach. Bihyung was silent for a moment before opening his mouth.

[...Okay. If you succeed in clearing this scenario then I will accept the contract.]

“The terms of the contract will be negotiated after the scenario is cleared.”

[So arrogant... then I will open the channel again. Please try hard.]

“Ah, wait a minute.”

It would be difficult if he left already. I had something to check.

“You have something left to do.”

[...What is it now?]

Bihyung’s mocking tone was somewhat annoying.

“Fix a system error for me.”

[System error?]

“My attributes window isn’t opening.”

[No way. The system can’t have an error. The scenario system is perfect.]

“Take a look yourself.”

Bihyung looked at me with suspicious eyes and started to mutter something.

[The dokkaebi ‘Bihyung’ has used ‘System Interference’ on you.]

System interference.

It was an absolute interference skill that could only be used by dokkaebis with the right to interfere in the scenario.

In fact, it was unclear if the reason why I couldn’t see the attributes window was an error or not. But at least the dokkaebi would be able to find out something. And if he couldn’t figure it out, that was also a profit for me.

[The exclusive skill, ‘Fourth Wall’ is activated!]

In the next moment, sparks flew in the air and struck Bihyung.

# Chapter 13

## Contract (3)

Looking at the situation, I got a sense of what happened.

“What is it? Is something wrong?”

[This isn’t possible. How can there be a firewall preventing the system interference...?]

It seemed Fourth Wall blocked not just the skills of an incarnation but the dokkaebi’s interference as well. If this was true, it meant nobody in Ways of Destruction could see my attributes window, including myself.

How interesting. It was the perfect condition to become a scammer.

“Forget about it.”

[P-Please wait! I can do it. U-Uh. What if I do this?]

“You can’t do it.”

[Kuaaack!]

Bihyung screamed like he had received an electric shock. The white fluffy hair on his skin was burnt black.

[T-This! This!]

“It’s okay. If you can’t do it then stop. I will ask for another favour.”

[This can’t be! I am Dokkaebi Bihyung. If I can’t solve this situation, the honor of the dokkaebi—]

I looked at the clock. It had been an hour since the ichthyosaur ate. There was no time to delay like this.

“The dokkaebi bag.”

Bihyung stopped his useless action of digging at the air.

[What?]

“Open the dokkaebi bag.”

[...How do you know about that?]

“Are you going to open it?”

[Only an incarnation with a sponsor can use the dokkaebi bag...]

“It is true that all incarnations that use the dokkaebi bag have a sponsor. But there is no rule that an incarnation without a sponsor can’t use the dokkaebi bag.”

[...Wait a minute.]

Bihyung pulled out a manual and confirmed it.

[At this point, I don’t know if I am a dokkaebi or you are. Are you actually a dokkaebi?]

The smiling Bihyung raised both hands.

[...Okay, there is no problem if you use it. However, the dokkaebi bag can only be used when the channel is open for streaming purposes. Is that okay?]

“It’s fine.”

[#BI-7623 channel is open.]

[The constellations have entered.]

Then an electric current appeared in the air. A transparent screen emerged in front of me.

[Welcome to the coin shop, the ‘Dokkaebi Bag.’]

The Dokkaebi Bag.

It was the moment when this damn world's 'cash store' was opened.



There were two ways to use coins in Ways of Survival.

One of them was to raise the level of the stats such as stamina and strength. The other was to use it as a common form of currency that could be used in various stores, including the dokkaebi bag.

[Buy it now! A starter pack for your incarnation for 2,500 coins!]

[A today only special! A 300% growth package, grow faster than others!]

[Did you accidentally pick an incarnation with a bad attribute? Don't worry! The 'Random Attribute Box' that can randomly change the attribute has been released!]

There were numerous coin items, including various packages. All of the advertisements in the Dokkaebi Bag were aimed at the constellations raising incarnations. It was natural. The original customers of the Dokkaebi Bag were constellations.

I got rid of the pop-up advertising windows one by one.

It was nothing compared to the 'disasters' that emerged after the fifth main scenario, but a sea commander ichthyosaur was no different from a disaster for the early stage incarnations.

I needed some items sold in the Dokkaebi Bag to defeat the ichthyosaur. Let's see...

I looked at the catalog before glancing over at Bihyung.

"Hey, are these the only items I can buy right now? Is there a search function?"

[At that... shit. Wait. Constellations. Please. Please calm down.]

From the moment the channel opened, Bihyung was repeating complains with a comic-like sweat.

[It was just a server error that shut the broadcast off for a while! I didn't turn it off on purpose.]

There was a total of 20 stars above Bihyung's head. Since not too many of them had left the channel, it seems that quite a few constellations wanted to see what happened to me. Of course, not all the constellations were friendly.

[A few constellations are questioning the fairness of the broadcast!]

[A few constellations are suspicious of the privileges you have received!]

It wasn't unexpected. While the broadcast was off, a hidden scenario started and the Dokkaebi Bag was opened. It was no wonder that the constellations were surprised.

[No, preferences? Look at this, Constellations. I am a dokkaebi. Don't you know that I will be extinguished if I do that? Don't you know that the storyteller vow is never light?]

"Will you help me?"

[...There is a product search button in the lower right corner.

"Thank you."

I ignored Bihyung and pressed the magnifying glass icon at the bottom of the package window.

[The product search function is activated.]

[The produce search is limited to 5 times a day. Any additional searches will cost 100 coins per search.]

In any case, humans and dokkaebi were the same. The total number of free searches given was five. Two searches were enough to buy the materials I needed so I had three searches left.

[The constellation Secretive Plotter is wondering about your plan.]

Yes, be curious. If you are curious, keep watching.

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is looking angrily at your actions.]

Don't watch if you are going to get all twisted up.

I opened my mouth to use the search function.

“Search for the ‘Ancient Dragon’ item.”

[There are three search results.]

A small pop-up window soon emerged.

\* Ancient Dragon’s Heart – Stock 7

\* Ancient Dragon’s Bone – Stock: 1

\* Ancient Dragon’s Horn – Stock: 1

I chose the Ancient Dragon’s Heart.

[Item Information]

Name: Ancient Dragon’s Heart

Rating: SS

Description: A heart containing the magic power of the ancient dragon ‘Ignitus.’ It possesses near-infinite magic power and the attribute ‘Hellfire’ will be acquired if a heart transplant is successful.

Price: 1,500,000 C

Stock: Just sold out.

As expected, it was out of stock. From beyond the catalog, Bihyung, who was dealing with the constellations, looked at me with his jaw dropped.

[Crazy. How do you know the information about the ancient dragon?]

“I just called out a nice name.”

[...It seems like a lie.]

I shrugged.

In the original Ways of Survival, the owner of the Ancient Dragon’s Heart was already determined. If I remember correctly, the owner of the heart was currently in Italy.

A person with good luck. They got such a diamond sponsor. I called out several more product names.

[The related product search is completed.]

\* Great Demon’s Eyes – Stock: 0

\* White Pure Star Energy – Stock: 1

The Great Demon's Eyes was sold out... the hands of the constellations were really quick. Well, I couldn't buy it since the selling price was 1 million coins.

At any rate, it was good to have a sponsor. Now the incarnation with the Great Demon's Eyes would grow and destroy the beginner scenarios.

[What are you really? What type of cheat are you using? How do you know about items that can only be found in the search?]

"I just said plausible names."

Among the three items that I searched for, only the White Pure Star Energy was in stock. Furthermore, the price was 10,000 coins so I couldn't buy it now. I put it in the shopping cart for now.

[What, are you buying it?]

"Not right now. I am just window shopping."

[Sheesh, what a waste of time.]

"I am going to buy something else so bring up the items I call out from now on."

I called out several item names. After a moment, a list of items emerged in front of me.

\* Mucus of the Hammer Sea Horse – Stock: 124

\* Stone Hog's Pointed Thorn – Stock: 17

I compared it to the list in my memories. The food of the ichthyosaur, the hammer sea horse and the stone hog, the nemesis of sea species... There was no doubt. This combination was the best when it came to attacking an ichthyosaur.

"Four mucus, four thorns. It is 800 coins?"

[Yes but... where are you going to use these miscellaneous items?]

"You don't need to know."

[...I don't want to be nosy but why don't you buy something else? For example, this Woryeong Sword Technique. It is originally 8,000 coins but I will now sell it for 4,000

coins. Wouldn't buying this be more helpful to clear the scenario?]

"Thank you but I will just buy this."

Bihyung wasn't satisfied but received the payment.

[800 coins have been consumed.]

In the darkness, a sparkling powder gathered and four elongated thorns and four pockets of black mucus appeared.

[I can't give a refund if you regret it now. Do you understand?]

"I know."

I briefly nodded and started working. I took off my top, tied it around my waist and stuck the thorns in the gap, while the pockets were hung from my waist.

The stone hog's thorn was stumpy but became sharp at the end. It was approximately one metre in length. It was a reasonable size to pierce something.

[Hrmm... then I'll be going. I can't stay with you. There is something fun going on in another place.]

"Do it."

[Huhu, then hang in there. I hope the story will bless you.]

Bihyung disappeared in a flash of light and the surroundings became dark again. I could use the light on my smartphone but I wanted to save the battery as much as possible.

In the darkness, the stone hog thorn was emitting a bluish light. It was a feeble light but for the moment, it would be sufficient.

I pulled out a thorn and swung it. Maybe it was because I didn't have a skill such as Weapons Training or Incarnation of All Soldiers. I couldn't get used to holding the thorn.

[A few constellations are bored.]

The impatient constellations left the channel. I couldn't see it but Bihyung was probably fretting right now.

Then an hour passed.

Right, left, up and down.

I didn't like it but I no longer had a problem handling the thorn. The surface finish was rough and didn't seem like it would slip easily from the hand.

It was time to begin. I used the proper force and stabbed at the ichthyosaur wall above me.

*Tiing!*

It was like poking a rubber elastic wall as the thorn bounced off. My current strength wasn't high enough to tear at the stomach of the ichthyosaur. It would probably be the same if I used a skill.

*Ku ku ku ku!*

At that moment, the small holes at the top of the stomach wall opened simultaneously. Then an absolutely disgusting liquid poured out.

"Kuweek!"

One of the demonic people floating on something in the stomach started shrieking.

*Chuchuchu.* The skin of the demonic person started burning. The digestion of the ichthyosaur had begun. The ichthyosaur's digestive juices quickly mixed in the river water and started to melt away at the concrete and other floating products.

*Chu chu chu chu!*

There was no time. It was going as planned.

I jumped from the floating object and gripped a bump on the wall of the stomach. Then I started climbing up the wall like I was rock climbing.

*Gurgle gurgle gurgle.*

The outlet of the digestive juices was right above. I put the thorn in my mouth and grabbed a pocket of mucus.

The mucus of the hammer sea horse. I poured the mysterious dark blue liquid onto my hand and applied the mucus carefully from the tip to the end of the thorn.

It was with precision and care, as if applying shaving cream to an area to be shaved. If the shaving cream protected the skin from the razor, the mucus protected the thorn from the digestive juices.

Go. I swung the thorn towards where the digestive juices were coming from. The angle was correct and I used my maximum strength.

*Kwaang!*

The digestive juices flowed down the thorn and dissolved the skin on my forearm. I experienced a terrible pain but didn't stop. If I made a mistake here then everything was over.

[The exclusive skill 'Fourth Wall' has relieved some of the pain.]

*Gurgle, gurgle. Chururuk...*

Before long, the thorn jammed up the emission point.

"Just one."

After a deep sigh, I pulled out another thorn from my waist. I applied the mucus of the hammer sea horse, found another opening and blocked it.

[A few constellations admire your calmness.]

[The constellations have sponsored you 200 coins.]

I used this method to block three opening points. There were some left, but the small openings didn't release large amounts of digestive fluids.

There was one thorn left in the top tightly tied around me. All that was left was one thorn and two pockets of mucus.

I used the remaining mucus on my skin and clothes, then poured what was remaining

down my throat.

“Kup.”

The fishy taste on my tongue was sickening but it was better than dying. The bitterness was nothing compared to the disaster that would occur from now on.

It was around five minutes afterwards that the entire stomach started trembling.

...It had started.

*Kieeeeeeeek-!*

The ichthyosaur let out a painful scream. The blood vessels on the wall of the stomach were squirming. The thorns were visibly expanding into the blood vessels.

The thorns in the openings had started their aggressive growth activity. The stone hog's thorn grew in response to the body fluids of seawater species.

*Gududuk, gududuk.*

The thorn that became immune to the digestive juices due to the applied mucus absorbed the surrounding fluids and started to take root in the body of the ichthyosaur.

The stone hog's thorns wouldn't stop expanding until the ichthyosaur was completely dead.

*Keeeeeeh!*

As I watched the liquid swirling under my feet, I grabbed the thorn tightly. I did everything I could. From now on, it was a mental fight.

Either I died or this guy would die. Only one of us would survive.

# Chapter 14

## Contract (4)

I didn't know how much time passed. My breathing was often interrupted and all my muscles were so stiff that I could barely move them.

[A few constellations admire your will to survive!]  
[The constellations have sponsored you 100 coins.]

But I persisted. I persisted because I believed I could hold on. The light emitted from the thorn in the darkness confirmed that I was alive. After confirming the falling temperature of the stomach wall, I was convinced that he was dying.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' admires your spirit.]  
[The constellation has sponsored you 100 coins.]

When I was hungry, I placed my tongue to the end of the thorn.

The condensed fluid that flowed out contained the life force absorbed from the ichthyosaur. The reason I drank the mucus in advance was to absorb this concentrate.

[Your stamina has slightly increased due to absorbing the power of the ichthyosaur.]

There wasn't an immediate effect of my stats level increasing, but by the time I escaped from the ichthyosaur, I would gain at least two levels in stamina.

It wouldn't work at a higher level, but this was one of the few tricks I could use to raise my stamina without using coins.

...Indeed, this wasn't a dream.

This was all I could do. I was just an ordinary reader. I wasn't a protagonist. It felt like I would wake up screaming in bed at any moment, but no such miracle happened no matter how much I blinked.

...Mother would be fine. She was okay. This wasn't anybody else, it was 'Mother.'

I fell asleep whenever the liquid on the floor drained away and woke up every time the cold river water entered my mouth.

Finally, the ichthyosaur's digestion stopped. The warmth of the viscera suddenly cooled down and the elastic stomach lining gradually solidified. Thus, I could be sure.

He died.

[...You are really great.]

A bright light in the darkness. Bihyung's dim figure was floating in the air.

[Using the stone hog's thorn like this. I never even thought about it. Constellations, isn't it the same for you?]

Bihyung looked at the stone hog's thorn emitting a faint light.

[The stone hog is a guy who mainly lives on the coast and feeds on small sea species. They insert the thorn into the skin of the prey but I didn't think it would be used to plug up the openings for the digestive juices...]

Bihyung's shining eyes weren't looking at me. The words weren't an explanation for me either.

[A few constellations are smiling as if they already know.]

[The constellations have sponsored you 100 coins.]

[A few constellations belatedly understand your judgment.]

[The constellations complain that you should tell them by talking to yourself from now on.]

I ignored the messages from the constellations and drank the last of the condensed fluid.

[Your stamina has slightly increased due to absorbing the power of the ichthyosaur.]

[Your stamina level has risen!]

[Stamina Lv. 11 -> Stamina Lv. 12]

I accomplished my intended purpose. Bihyung came down to me and looked at my burnt arm.

[Furthermore, the mucus... I didn't know the mucus of the hammer sea horse was so potent.]

Originally, my skin should've melted from the ichthyosaur's digestive juices. I opened my mouth to stop Bihyung's nonsense.

"The mucus of the hammer sea horse is immune to digestive fluids. They evolved in this way after often being eaten by the ichthyosaurs."

[A few constellations admire your knowledge.]

Then Bihyung looked at me with a betrayed expression.

[Excuse me, I should be the one explaining...]

"I did it because you don't know. Now is the explanation over?"

[...Yes.]

"Then give me the reward."

[Cheeky bastard.]

Bihyung grumbled while at the same time, a reward message appeared in front of my eyes.

[The hidden scenario has ended.]

[You have obtained 9,000 coins in compensation.]

[You are the first to have successfully hunted a grade 7 species.]

[You have earned 1,000 coins as an achievement reward.]

9,000 coins plus an additional 1,000 coins. It was a very huge income.

[Coins Possessed: 14,800 C]

If I added the 500 donated coins from filming my survival, the total income was 10,500 coins. It was over my target.

[Haha, Constellations. Did you see it well? Let's quickly watch an advertisement before going straight to the next scenario!]

I could hear the faint sounds of an ad somewhere.

*New scenario opening featured package, 8,800 coins...*

Once the eyes of the constellations disappeared, Bihyung started speaking to me in a friendly manner.

[Sigh... it was a great survival. The response from the constellations was amazing.]

“How much time passed?”

[Four days. I was in suspense the whole time I was watching. Were you unaware of the time?]

“My smartphone died.”

It took more time than I thought. The original goal was two days... Well, Yoo Jonghyuk took four days in the fourth round to catch this so the speed wasn't slow.

Anyway, I did it.

A pleasant feeling of fulfilment covered my whole body and made me confident. I was an ordinary person with ordinary skills. But even so, this didn't mean I could only do ordinary things.

“...How funny.”

It was strange. A novel that hadn't been helpful for 28 years was now making me extraordinary.

[Oh, you are already talking to yourself?]

“ ... ”

[Isn't it good? For an incarnation, talking to yourself is essential. Of course, there are constellations who dislike it but usually...]

“Shut up and open the Dokkaebi Bag.”

[Why? Are you going to buy something?]

“I’m not buying but selling.”

[Damn, I’ll have to cut the ad short. Constellations, hold on a second. I’ll adjust the volume.]

As Bihyung opened the Dokkaebi Bag, I looked at the thorns embedded in the wall.

The upper barrier was hardened and deep cracks formed around the thorns. I could now smash through the upper barrier with my strength.

I broke the wall little by little with the one remaining thorn. Shortly afterwards, I encountered the core of the ichthyosaur that was glowing blue.

[Ichthyosaur’s Core]

It was an ether core found in monster species grade 7 or higher. I could raise my magic power level without coins if I ingested them. It was good quality because it was a sea commander grade ichthyosaur.

I carefully cut at the flesh around the core while Bihyung looked at me with a dumbfounded expression.

“I’ll sell this.”

[You really...]

“Of course, I don’t mean to sell it to you. I’ll put it on the dokkaebi auction.”

Bihyung accepted it like he was tired of asking me anything.

[Sigh... do what you want. How much are you going to charge?]

“I won’t sell it for coins. I’ll sell it by barter.”

[Damn, you know all sorts of things.]

Bihyung grumbled while uploaded the item to the dokkaebi auction. His desires were simple. This guy might listen better than I thought.

“Someone will show up to buy it. And the item exchanged must be ‘Broken Faith.’”

[Broken Faith? There is a person with it... in any case, it is registered.]

“Yes. And I will buy this...”

I saw White Pure Star Energy in the shopping cart. Indeed, nobody bought it yet. Most constellations weren't well aware of the value of coin items. The expensive items in the Dokkaebi Bag weren't unconditionally good.

[Wait a minute, can I talk to you for a moment?]

At Bihyung's words, the advertising volume increased again.

[The constellations are complaining about the long advertisement.]

Once I saw that one more advertisement had appeared, I had a hunch about what Bihyung wanted to say.

“Is it the contract?”

Advertising was the only way to hide the eyes and ears of the constellations without turning off the broadcast. From now on, it wasn't a story for the constellations.

[Yes. I wasn't certain but I became convinced after this scenario. Well... let's try it once. I can help you a little bit.]

“Won't this violate the streamer's pledge?”

[Ah, of course, I can't really help you. I'm just saying that. Will you sign the contract?]

“What are the conditions?”

[Take a look.]

The dokkaebi pulled out an extravagant contract that had been prepared.

I read the contract that emerged as a transparent window in the air.

—

[Stream Contract Agreement]

1. Incarnation Kim Dojka (Gap) will sign an exclusive contract with Bihyung (Eul) until all scenarios are completed or until his death. *(TL: Gap and Eul are based on the 10 celestial/heavenly stems (Link). In Korea, they are consistently used to denote the smaller and larger contractor in a legal contract.)*

—

“...I am the gap?”

[Haha, don't humans like this? It doesn't mean anything. Keep reading.]

—

2. Incarnation Kim Dokja (Gap) will never choose a sponsor until all scenarios have ended or his death.

—

This was also as expected.

—

3. Incarnation Kim Dokja (Gap) should only be active on the channel of Dokkaebi Bihyung (Eul).
4. Incarnation Kim Dokja (Gap) and Dokkaebi Bihyung (Eul) will distribute the revenue from stream contracts and this ratio will be determined through mutual consultation.
- .....
10. Incarnation Kim Dokja (Gap) and Dokkaebi Bihyung (Eul) will be subject to destruction in accordance to the laws of Star Stream if they break this contract.

—

I read the contract carefully to the last item. I thought he might play an unknown joke but I didn't see that part.

Except for one thing.

“There is the most important part.”

[What do you mean? You can just say that you agree. The stream contract is a soul pledge—]

“I’m talking about the pay ratio.”

[A-Ahh. Haha. Right.]

As if this bastard didn’t know.

This was the most important part.

“How about 5:5? Instead, I’ll get rid of my channel fee. Ah, do you know how to calculate it? I will accurately divide your future donations in this ratio. For example, if you get 100 coins, you will receive 50 coins and I will receive 50 coins.]

All stream contracts were like this. The constellations had incarnations appear on the dokkaebi’s channel and the contributions received from other constellations would be divided by a percentage. This was normal.

“Are you taking me for a pushover? I won’t accept.”

[What? B-But this is the industry’s default settlement ratio...]

“I’m an incarnation without a sponsor. When donating to an incarnation without a sponsor, the constellations must pay a huge fee to the dokkaebi. Haven’t you already enjoyed a lot thanks to me?”

Bihyung’s jaw slowly dropped open. But there was no point making that expression.

“10:0. You will only get the commission. I won’t pay you a single penny.”

[What?! That is ridiculous... h-how about 7:3?]

The ratio changed greatly. But I wasn’t going to concede.

“10:0.”

[What is this fucking bullshit? It is a ridiculous rate—]

“Then don’t accept. I will just go to another channel. ‘Gildal’ is doing well these days. I should ask him.”

[...8:2. I can’t concede anymore.]

“10:0.”

[.....]

Bihyung’s expression changed to a threatening one. He looked at my head like it would explode at any minute. But I knew. He would never give up the contract. My existence was his last chance.

“The advertisement is coming to an end. Don’t you see the constellations complaining?”

In the end, Bihyung gave up.

[Shit, I understand. Then will you sign the contract?]

He surrendered easier than I thought. In fact, I was going to give up at 9:1.

...Maybe he earned more money than I expected. It was a bit disgusting.

“Yes. And one more thing.”

[What? What now?]

“You have to give a separate down payment. Give me 5,000 coins.”

Bihyung’s expression tightened.

[Y-You really...]

I laughed. Why was a ‘gap’ a ‘gap and why did humans dwell on it... I would let that damn dokkaebi know.

[The stream contract is concluded.]

[You have received 5,000 coins as a down payment.]

The advertisement finished and the constellations came back. I patted the dokkaebi on the shoulder and said.

“Let’s get out of here.”

Now was the real start.

# Chapter 15

## Line of Hypocrisy (1)

A meteor shower was pouring down in the starry sky. It was a sight that anyone would admire, but not Yoo Jonghyuk.

{It is starting.}

The meteor shower was the precursor to the third main scenario starting. Now Seoul would be destroyed one by one according to the scenario.

Yoo Jonghyuk looked up at the sky before bowing his head and looking at the Han River.

The landscape around Dongho Bridge was quite desolate since the large group of ichthyosaurs had recently moved downstream.

{It was too much.}

It had already been three days since Kim Dokja entered Han River. It might've been too much to demand that he catch the ichthyosaur at the first level.

{Indeed, it would be hard for me to catch an ichthyosaur in three days.}

But it would be impossible to take him if he couldn't do this much. If he couldn't even do this much, it would only hinder Yoo Jonghyuk.

{A prophet isn't a big deal.}

Yoo Jonghyuk closed his eyes with disappointment. He would go on his own again. Without any companions.

It wasn't a big deal. He had been alone all this time.

{This time I will definitely change it.}

Yoo Jonghyuk turned around.

But maybe he had turned away too soon.



“Wait...!”

[W-What?]

I blinked several times but could only see a grey-white ceiling. I was still inside the ichthyosaur. I turned my head and saw the surprised Bihyung.

“...I had a dream.”

[Ohu, are you trying to raise curiosity? It isn't bad?]

I didn't mean to do such a thing but I didn't mind the misunderstanding.

[A few constellations want you to move to a new place quickly.]

I used 500 coins to buy the Ellain Forest's Vital Force to help me sleep. I thought it was too dangerous to move while exhausted.

The Ellain Forest's Vital Force quickly recovered fatigue and wounds in exchange for two hours of sleep. In other words, it was an expensive item.

“...I really want to go out.”

I talked to myself while stretching my body. The dream I just had was still clear. Maybe it wasn't a dream.

*Kwajijjik!*

I heard the sound of an electric current scattering and Bihyung disappeared without a word. Maybe he went to do his job.

I sighed with relief.

The stream contract with the dokkaebi. It was a gamble that I never would've

attempted if I hadn't known about Bihyung from Ways of Survival. But I did it with surprising calm. I never succeeded in any contracts in 'real life.'

[The exclusive skill, 'Fourth Wall' is in use.]

...This was real. I inserted strength to my right hand holding the thorn. I really thought this world was reality.

[A few constellations want you to act.]

Well, there was no time to worry about it. I swung the thorn as hard as I could at the stomach wall that lost its elasticity. At the same time, there was the sound of something collapsed and water pouring out. I plunged into Han River.

"Puah!"

Fortunately, I didn't see any other ichthyosaurs. Small seawater species approached with curiosity but no hostility was felt. Not all creatures would attack humans.

Dongho Bridge was over there.

I used a piece of the ichthyosaur corpse as a floatation device and made my way towards dry land.

My skin was cold from the cold water but I couldn't worry about it. After 30 minutes of swimming, my hand reached land.

[A few constellations are nervous looking at you.]

Normally, danger would immediately come after this message popped up.

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is making an insidious smile.]

It was a pity for the constellations but something bad wouldn't happen to me. It was because I already knew the dangers.

[You have entered the region of the second main scenario.]

[The land in the scenario area is deeply polluted.]

[Be careful about your breathing and move underground as quickly as possible.]

The message said this but in fact, I shouldn't be on the ground from the moment this scenario started.

Why? Look at my skin now.

[You have been exposed to poisonous fog.]

The skin touched by the violet fog turned black.

*Kyhhh!*

Once I followed the source of the fog with my eyes, I saw a monster making terrible cries.

It was a massive monster over 30 metres big. This fog was the fart of the grade 7 monster, 'great poisonous rhinoceros.' The rhino snorted and confronted a monster in the fog, which seemed to be an insect king species based on the shadow.

*Kuaaaaah...*

The struggle in this new world wasn't just for humans. The monsters were also fighting for their homes.

I moved while holding my breath as much as possible.

They were grade 7 monsters like the ichthyosaur but I couldn't do with them right now. In the first place, I could kill the sea commander because I was prepared.

[You have used the Ellain Monkey's Lungs.]

The monkey's lungs was an item I bought in advance that could be used as a substitute for an air purifier for 20 minutes.

[A few constellations admire your readiness!]

The aboveground station, Oksu Station had already been destroyed. The nearest underground station from here was 'Gumho Station.' Maybe the others had moved there.

I moved quickly while avoiding the small species that were eating the corpses. I only

had 20 minutes, so I needed to move as quickly as possible while securing supplies.

The first thing I needed was clothes. My outerwear was melted by the ichthyosaur's fluids so it was necessary. Of course, there were many of them all around but... I felt uncomfortable.

...It couldn't be helped. I searched some bodies and grabbed clothes that roughly fit. Then I headed to a nearby convenience store.

I grabbed a few plastic bags and swept in food randomly. Food would be a valuable trading item after going underground.

I filled three or four bags like this. It seemed that the colour of the monkey's lungs was becoming increasingly darker. There wasn't much time left.

Then I heard someone's voice.

"Help... help me."

There was someone still alive? A young woman was lying down in a corner. The poisoning was progressing on the surface of the skin, but the toxic condition wasn't severe due to the mask she was wearing. Her jacket was half removed and a bit of her skirt was torn.

"Are you okay? Can you stand?"

"Uhhhh..."

Was there such an extra in Ways of Survival? I wanted to take a closer look but I didn't have enough time. I picked up the woman and ran to Gumho Station.

I turned and a side street appeared. Now the distance to Gumho Station was 100 metres in a straight line. I breathed in and started to run with all my strength. I could see the Exit 3 sign in the distance.

...Closed. Then on the other side?

There was a fire shutter down at every exit due to the disaster situation. I could break the shutter with his thorn but if I did it wrong, the people inside might be damaged.

“E-Exit 4...”

Unexpectedly, the woman I was carrying was helpful. I ran towards Exit 4. Then I found a fire shutter that was rolling down. I placed the thorn in the gap of the shutter that was trying to close. Somebody yelled out.

“Shit, what is this?”

“Open the door.”

“N-No! You can’t come in! Go away!”

“There is a wounded person.”

“We are already in a full state! We don’t need any more people!”

It was full of people? Strange. Was there such a development?

“I don’t care about that.”

I used the thorn as a lever and lifted the shutter as hard as possible. Since I used the coins to increase my strength to level 10, I now had the strength of half a dozen adult males.

“Uwaaaaack!”

There was a loud sound and the people on the other side of the shutter became nervous.

“R-Run away!”

The scared men escaped into the darkness of the underground passage. I entered the station safely, lowered the shutter and put the girl down on the floor.

[You have entered the safety zone.]

The poisonous fog didn’t come down to the underground area. There was no possible scientific explanation. It was just because of the ‘scenario.’

“Put this in your mouth.”

I took off the woman's mask and handed over the monkey's lungs. It wouldn't completely cure her but it would have a neutralizing effect.

"Umm..."

A faint groan emerged from the mouth of the woman. The woman who was abandoned.

I suddenly wondered about her information. This woman, it was likely that she had died in the original development.

A voice was heard as I was about to use Character List.

"There he is!"

Light from a flashlight approached in the darkness. My eyes narrowed as I saw men holding metal pipes.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' frowns at the appearance of the uninvited people.]

A big man in the middle opened his mouth. His body was well balanced so he must be a strong person.

"Who are you?"

At this moment, I was strangely struck dumb. What should I say when this happened? I thought for a moment before speaking like Yoo Jonghyuk.

"Kim Dokja."

"...Kim Dokja? That is your name?"

"Yes."

"Who asked that? What is this bastard?"

It was a more difficult question.

"U-Uh! That woman..."

One of the men found the woman beside me and shone the flashlight on her.'

"What, isn't that woman from the marginalized group? Didn't you come back with her?"

"T-That is..."

The man's flashlight moved in a harassing manner near the woman's waist.

"...Ha, so it was like that. Cute guys. Why did you do that without Hyung-nim's permission?"

"Hehe. I'm sorry."

"No, of course Cheolsoo hyung-nim should be first... hehe, I was going to do that."

Cheolsoo? Cheolsoo. Was there a character by that name? I couldn't remember. He must be nothing, as opposed to how he looked.

"Hey, hand that woman over to us... huh? What is that?"

The flashlight shone on the convenience store bags on the floor. It was okay to escape the crisis but the flow was turning out bad.

"Leave that as well. Then you can live."

To be exact, it wasn't good for these guys, not me.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is annoyed at these people.]  
[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is angry with the injustice occurring.]  
[A bounty scenario has occurred at the request of the constellations!]

+

[Bounty Scenario – Remove the Interference]

Category: Sub

Difficulty: F

Clear Conditions: The constellations feel great anger at the disruptors who are obstructing your rapid movements. Neutralize them within the time limit.

Time Limit: 5 minutes.

Compensation: ???

Failure: ???

+

I thought it would be like this. Poor bastards. I got up while holding the thorn.

There weren't any minors in the constellations right?

I hoped so. It was because it was now the adult broadcasting time.

# Chapter 16

## Line of Hypocrisy (2)

I often thought about it.

Why did so many ‘predictable villains’ appear in post-apocalyptic stories. It must be the laziness of the authors to think that crimes such as rape or theft would occur indiscriminately in such a situation. If the real ‘destruction’ came, wouldn’t humans act more rationally than they thought?

“It looks like he won’t give it. Hey, go ahead and kill him!”

The answer was now right in front of me. I observed the men coming towards me, as well as the man watching from the rear.

[The constellation ‘Demon-like Judge of Fire’ expects a fair judgment.]

I once again realized it. The human imagination was cliché, yet real humans were more cliché than the imagination.

*Hwiiik!*

The trajectory of the iron pipe moved in a funny manner through the air. It wasn’t a strike with the intent to kill. In fact, it didn’t hurt that much.

“I-If you don’t run away then you really will die. Get lost!”

The four men surrounded me. One was trembling but the others looked more relaxed than before. It was probably due to the advantage in numbers.

“What are these brats doing?”

*Waaaah!* Along with the shout, one man rushed forward. It was clearly a defenseless posture. I moved the thorn.

*Puok!*

“Aaaaack! My leg! My leg!”

“You bastard!”

“Hit him together!”

The agitated men rushed simultaneously but I wasn't afraid. Their strength level was just above 5. I endured the incoming attacks and silently stabbed the thorn.

*Tang! Kaaang!*

*Puok! Puok!*

The men had their thighs successively pierced and fell to their knees with a scream. But I didn't kill them. It was because the scenario clear condition was to 'neutralize' them.

[The constellations of the absolute good system nod at your judgment.]

[A few constellations laugh at your humanity.]

[The constellations have sponsored you 100 coins.]

If I became a murderer, I might be able to attract the attention of the constellations for a while. However, it was only a while. Instantly raising the threshold of stimulation wasn't good in the long run.

[There are three minutes to the end of the scenario.]

Two minutes had passed. Time calculation was important in time attack scenarios.

“W-What the hell is this bastard? Why won't you die?”

At this time, their leader who was watching the situation from the back came forward.

“You are a fairly tough guy. Everyone back off. I will deal with him.”

“Cheolsoo hyung-nim! This guy seems to have a pretty strong sponsor!”

“Good. It looks like he has a lot of coins.”

Knuckles shining with a black gloss. They weren't ordinary iron knuckles. Did he

receive it from his sponsor?

*Crunch.*

There was the relaxed sound of bones cracking from the knuckled hands.

[The character 'Cheolsoo' has used Threaten.]

[Threaten doesn't work because the overall capabilities gap is too big.]

"Hoh, aren't you quite good? You aren't getting scared at all."

The man's fist moved before he finished talking. The attack was aimed exactly at my jaw. I quickly stepped back. That guy smiled.

"Aren't you quite good? Do you exercise?"

Even if I didn't have a footwork skill, anyone could do this if their agility exceeded level 10. Since I previously invested most of my remaining coins after buying items, the total sum of my body stats now reached 33.

Should I look at this guy?

[The exclusive skill, Character List is activated.]

[Character Information]

Name: Bang Cheolsoo.

Age: 34 years old.

Constellation Sponsor: Monarch of the Small Fries.

Private Attribute: Assault Force Captain (General)

Exclusive skills: Dogfight Lv. 2, Bluff Lv. 2.

Stigmata: [Threaten Lv.1]

Overall Stats: Stamina Lv. 6, Strength Lv. 7, Agility Lv. 6, Magic Power Lv. 2.

Overall Evaluation: A common small fry who was lucky to obtain a sponsor. He has a tendency to overstate his abilities compared to his actual combat strength.

Ah... right. Now I remembered.

"Bang Cheolsoo of the Cheoldoo Group."

"What, you know me?"

“Let’s see?”

My memory was dim because he disappeared like the wind at the beginning of the work, but I fuzzily recalled there was a character called Bang Cheolsoo.

He was the stupidest guy in the group at Gumho Station.

As far as I knew, these guys should’ve been killed by Yoo Jonghyuk. Why were they still alive?

“Ohu, perhaps you are of ‘that’ category? You must’ve killed people. Isn’t that right? Yes, I feel that we are somewhat alike.”

[The character ‘Bang Cheolsoo’ has used Bluff.]

Bluff. It was a skill that anyone who was a thug possessed. It was a good debuff that could weaken the opponent’s attack power, but this case was different.

[Fourth Wall has blocked the bluff of the character Bang Cheolsoo.]

[The confidence of the character Bang Cheolsoo is rapidly falling.]

“Are you ignoring me? You really want to die.”

Bang Cheolsoo took a threatening Greco-Roman wrestling posture and rushed towards me. But that was only a bluff. It was because he didn’t have the ‘wrestling’ skill.

“Stop beating around the bush and come on.”

“Son of a bitch!”

The key skill that Bang Cheolsoo had was Dogfight Lv. 2. His combat power was insignificant unless he got into a melee.

“Die!”

The agility difference was so high that his attacks rarely hit me. I looked at him with a bit of sympathy.

Not all constellations had a desire to raise their incarnations as the ‘protagonist’ of the

scenario.

For example, his constellation 'Monarch of the Small Fries' was famous for being thrifty with his incarnations. A masochist who enjoyed using idiots as his incarnation, enjoying watching them be crushed by other incarnations.

That was the 'Monarch of the Small Fries.'

[The constellation 'Monarch of the Small Fries' is delighted.]

[The constellation 'Monarch of the Small Fries' has sponsored you 100 coins.]

Despite his incarnation being smashed, he was supporting the enemy. Originally, I was thinking about ending the time attack in one blow but now the story was a bit different.

[There are two minutes to the end of the sub scenario.]

Then I should make the most of the remaining time.

"You rat bastard!"

All of his lines were in the style of the Monarch of the Small Fries. How pitiful.

*Peeok!*

"Haha! I hit you!"

His attack luckily hit but there was little damage. The spot where I was hit just stung a bit.

"How?"

How? My stamina was Lv. 12. His strength was only Lv. 7. The difference in the overall stats gap created a huge combat power gap.

"Is it my turn now?"

I touched the cheek of the stupefied Bang Cheolsoo before hitting it as hard as I could. A few teeth flew out as Bang Cheolsoo screamed. I didn't hesitate and pierced his arm precisely with the thorn.

“Aaaagh!”

I fixed one of his arms to the wall with the thorn and started the indiscriminate assault. I chose the areas that were the most painful without knocking him out, such as the back, thigh, femur and side.

[The constellation ‘Monarch of the Small Fries’ is delighted.]

[The constellation ‘Monarch of the Small Fries’ has requested an extension of the sub scenario time.]

[The sub scenario is extended by one minute.]

I also paid attention to the parts where the woman had been injured.

“Cough! Kuheok! Kuheeok!”

Blood and flesh were scattered. Broken teeth fell to the ground and the broken bones twisted abnormally. However, I didn’t stop kicking.

“S-Stop! Please! Let Hyung-nim go!”

The men standing to the side exclaimed with panic. I looked over at them once in a while. Then he looked at the half naked woman lying on the ground.

Humans were weak. How could such weak humans do such cruel things? They used the excuse of the world being destroyed. They killed, raped women and stole from others.

Was it because of instincts?

I was suddenly curious as I saw Bang Cheolsoo’s eyes stained with fear in front of a stronger violence?

“Why did you do it?”

It was a question out of nowhere. In fact, I didn’t expect an answer to this question. But the moment I was about to kick him again, Bang Cheolsoo opened his eyes.

“Fuck... just kill me you son of a bitch.”

The moment I saw his eyes, I knew he had answered my question in his own way. A

look that didn't show any lingering attachment to life. Yes. It wasn't because of instincts.

Bang Cheolsoo talked in a voice that was subsiding.

"Dog, this dog-like world..."

This guy was a human who had been despairing long before this world was destroyed. Just like me.

[There are 10 seconds left to the end of the sub scenario.]

I didn't delay any further and gave a strong kick to his neck.

The breath was knocked out of him and Bang Cheolsoo finally fainted.

[You have met the conditions to clear the sub scenario.]

[You have earned 300 coins.]

I hope all of you are happy.

[The constellation 'Monarch of the Small Fries' is satisfied and has sponsored you 100 coins.]

The other men crawled and approached me one by one.

"H-How cruel..."

They looked at Bang Cheolsoo, who had been turned into a rag, and then up at me with fear. It was like they were dogs waiting to be disposed of at a slaughterhouse.

I picked up the collapsed woman and the convenience store bags. In any case, the world had been destroyed and I had to live a new life.

"Take me to where the group is.



Gumho Station was originally a place that would grow into the region's base after it was organized by Yoo Jonghyuk.

In his first regression, Yoo Jonghyuk broke through the second main scenario with the Gumho Station group, allowing the people of the group to occupy a place in the new era.

But that was the first story. By the third round of regression, Yoo Jonghyuk was different.

The 3rd turn Yoo Jonghyuk was a monster who monopolized everything.

“...Even so, he was someone who would do the basic clean up.”

“Huh?”

The man guiding me was surprised.

“I’m just talking to myself. It is a habit.”

[The constellation Secretive Plotter likes your monologues.]

“Yes... anyway, this way.”

The men of the Cheoldoo Group, who were supporting each other, stopped moving. We descended to the bottom of the dark platform and found a place where there was still light.

I heard the buzzing sound of people as we went down the stairs.

“The Cheoldoo Group! People are hurt!”

Some people rushed over to support Bang Cheolsoo’s group. There was more of a system than I thought since people were moving in an orderly fashion.

In the meantime, I saw familiar faces run over.

“Oh my god. Dokja-ssi! Dokja-ssi!”

Fortunately, it looks like nothing happened.

“Yoo Sangah-ssi.”

“I’m glad. Really, I’m really glad!”

Yoo Sangah stood in front of me with a happy expression. I was startled and asked for an awkward handshake. There were a lot of scrapes on the back of Yoo Sangah’s hand, showing she had suffered quite a hard time in the past four days.

I heard a sound and something became attached to my leg.

“You’re alive.”

It was Lee Gilyoung. I stroked the boy’s head.

“Have you been well?”

Lee Gilyoung nodded. He must be hungry since his cheeks were really thin. I pulled out a chocolate bar from the bag and placed it in Lee Gilyoung’s hand.

“I knew you were alive, Dokja-ssi. Hah...”

Finally, I looked at Lee Hyunsung. The muscles of his upper half seemed to have become more solid. Maybe Lee Hyunsung had protected these two.

“I’m really sorry. At that time, I left Dojka-ssi...”

“It was an unavoidable situation.”

“Phew, I’m glad that Yoo Jonghyuk-ssi was right.”

...Yoo Jonghyuk? Why was that name heard here?

Lee Hyunsung noticed after a moment and said.

“That, Yoo Jonghyuk said that Dokja-ssi was probably alive...”

“...Where is Yoo Jonghyuk now?”

“He isn’t here now.”

Not here?

“Yoo Jonghyuk-ssi left the station yesterday. So...”

I could determine many things before Lee Hyunsung finished speaking. I see. It was truly like that. He was a person in a rush.

“That reminds me, there is one more person.”

“Ah, the department head.”

Yoo Sangah didn’t finish speaking because a group of men suddenly intruded. But it was a good thing.

“Everybody, out of the way!”

I didn’t have to hear the explanation to see what happened straight away. Three or four men armed with a hammer or pipe started to surround me. There was a familiar face among them.

“Y-You...!”

Han Myungoh abandoned me on the Even Bridge and now he looked like he had seen a ghost. Han Myungoh must’ve joined this group.

“G-Get rid of that guy! He is a very bad person! He shouldn’t be here!”

A thief was always the one who felt pins and needles. Han Myungoh started exclaiming wildly.

However, I noticed that the other men looked at each other and didn’t easily move. There was something weird. Han Myungoh was placed in the centre yet they didn’t listen to him?

“Haha, Han hyung. Everyone should get along so why don’t you stop?”

“Ah, t-that...”

“You are a new person.”

The men split apart to the sides and a path was formed. A slim man appeared among them. I could tell just by looking in his eyes. This guy had a sponsor.

“Nice to meet you. Can I ask what your name is?”

“Kim Dokja.”

“Dokja-ssi. I see. I am Cheon Inho.”

Cheon Inho? It felt like a name I should remember. I inserted strength to the hand holding the thorn. It looked like this guy was the leader of the Cheoldoo Group. He lost half of his men to me so he came here to make trouble.

“I heard the story from those you came with. You fought a monster and saved my group members.”

...What?

“Everyone, please gather! We have a brave new group member!”

After Cheon Inho’s words, people started to turn this way one by one.

It was at this time that I knew. It was impossible for the charisma of Han Myungoh to gather this much power. Cheon Inho was the real leader of this bunch.

“Wah! It is food!”

Hungry eyes fell on the convenience store bags. Then Cheon Inho spoke as if he had been waiting.

“He delivered it exactly to us. He is a rare good person.”

The words made all the eyes look at me like I was a savior. The mother holding the child and the elderly man who hurt his leg were looking at me earnestly.

Cheon Inho... I seemed to remember. Yes, there was this guy in the Gumho station group.

[The constellation ‘Secretive Plotter’ is excited.]

In this ruined world, the real danger wasn’t people like Bang Cheolsoo. Humans moving while feeling despair weren’t the least bit dangerous to me.

The really dangerous people were those who used the despair of others as a fertilizer for power. Just like this guy.

“Welcome to Gumho Station, Kim Dokja-ssi.”

Cheon Inho were laughing deeply while gazing at me. He inwardly laughed while shaking my hand.

Cheon Inho would never know. At this moment, his future had been decided.

# Chapter 17

## Line of Hypocrisy (3)

Despite the interference of Cheon Inho, the constellations didn't ask for a bounty scenario. In other words, it wasn't the best time to deal with him.

For around half a day, I focused on grasping the situation of Gumho Station. It was Lee Hyunsung who mainly gave information.

"Currently, there are 86 people in Gumho Station. Ah, I guess it is 87 people now with Dokja-ssi."

"It is less than I thought."

"Yes. When the scenario broke out, only those near the station and those on the train survived. Everyone didn't say it but perhaps in the first scenario..."

I didn't need to be told the next words. I could see it from the expressions of the people. Those who survived had trampled on someone's life. All the humans here were murderers.

"Currently, Gumho Station is divided into two groups. Strictly speaking, it is one group and the rest."

Lee Hyunsung looked at the people with a dark expression. There were men armed with iron pipes or other instruments. It was clear which was the faction in power.

"Believe in me! The group president is working hard and everyone will soon be rescued."

The youngest son of Hankyung Group, Han Myungoh.

"Hyung-nim is right, everyone. Don't lose hope. We will be able to lead."

The one who embraced Han Myungoh and practically led the group was Cheon Inho. They were the 'mainstream group.'

“Mother, I’m bored... can’t I play a game on the phone?”

“Hold on for a moment. The rescue team will come soon.”

“The government will act. It isn’t that easy to collapse a country.”

And the people who were protected by the mainstream group and wanted to get on with their lives were the ‘marginalized group.’

Their will was too weak to be killers. Even if 100 murderers were gathered together, they would be divided between the weak and the strong. Maybe they were thinking that they weren’t murderers. They all believed it was unavoidable.

Lee Hyunsung watched the mainstream group inciting the people and said.

“Food distribution is determined by the mainstream group. Convenience stores and restaurants in the region have already been robbed... the foods that can be eaten right now are almost gone.”

“I see.”

“It is the reason why some people from the mainstream group were sent above ground for food exploration. Heewon-ssi, who you brought in, went with them”

“Heewon-ssi...?”

“Ah, it is the name of the woman who Dokja-ssi saved.”

I looked at the woman who lay on the subway bench. Under the bright light, her beauty could be seen. Her raised cheeks and gentle features meant she must’ve often heard she was attractive. Thanks to the monkey’s lungs, her colour was much brighter than it was this morning.

“Is Heewon-ssi the only one who didn’t come back?”

“No. In fact, a few more people went out this morning but only those from the marginalized group didn’t return.”

“They didn’t come back?”

“Yes.”

Lee Hyunsung’s expression became sad again. He thought he roughly knew what happened.

I grabbed Lee Hyunsung’s shoulder. I knew for sure after actually touching him. He truly was the steel sword. His strength would soon exceed level 10.

“W-Why are you...?”

“Lee Hyunsung-ssi should’ve received a love call but you didn’t accept.”

“Ah, that...”

Objectively, Lee Hyunsung’s combat power was higher than Bang Cheolsoo. There was no way Cheon Inho wouldn’t aim for him.

“I can’t explain it but I thought I shouldn’t accept. I don’t know much about morals or ethics but...”

Lee Hyunsung scratched his head like he was embarrassed.

“I felt that something wasn’t right.”

Not right... It wasn’t an answer but I felt it was true. Indeed, Lee Hyunsung was Lee Hyunsung.

“Don’t forget this heart.”

That way, I could continue to believe in him.

I heard a cute sound from somewhere and looked back, seeing Yoo Sangah and Lee Gilyoung looking up at me. Their faces were like baby birds waiting for the mother bird, making me laugh.

“That reminds me, it is already evening. Aren’t you hungry? Take this one by one.”

I handed over the food from the convenience store one by one.

“Ah. Really? Can I?”

“This time is free. But next time, you should pay for it.”

“Huh? H-How much...?”

“Don’t you all have coins? It is 10 coins for one.”

“T-That...”

Confusion filled the faces of Yoo Sangah and Lee Hyunsung. They looked like they hadn’t expected my words.

“Of course. I will pay right now. I don’t need freebies.”

Surprisingly, the one who spoke was the woman who had been lying on the bench. She had regained consciousness.

“I am Jung Heewon. Thank you for your help this morning.”

“It is nothing.”

I thought it was just a cute mask but I could see that it was a prejudice.

“Yoo Sangah-ssi, Lee Hyunsung-ssi. Everyone, please wake up. It isn’t the time to be making this look. This food, he obtained it by risking his life. Do you expect to get it for free?”

There was almost no expression on the face that spoke without hesitation.

“Ah...” Yoo Sangah turned red like she had woken up. “I was too short-sighted, I’m sorry. Of course we should pay... it is right. I don’t like freebies either. I hate depending on other people.”

“I also agree with Yoo Sangah-ssi. I will pay coins from now on.”

I was a little surprised by the unexpected reaction. Indeed, just because it was an apocalypse didn’t mean there was only one type of person.

“If you insist... I understand. Does everyone know how to exchange coins?”

“Yes. I learned a few days ago. Touch each other’s index finger, um, and...”

“Just state how many coins you want to exchange.”

Starting from Jung Heewon, Yoo Sangah and Lee Hyunsung paid 10 coins in exchange for food. It was fortunate that their resistance wasn't bigger than what I thought.

I didn't do this in order to get a few coins. At first, this judgment might seem harsh but people would soon realize this choice was right.

[‘Lee Gilyoung’ has paid you 20 coins.]

“Huh? You gave me more than 10 coins?”

“It is the price for the chocolate bar during the day.”

Lee Gilyoung's expression while speaking was quite good. Maybe the fastest to adapt to a new world wasn't an adult but a child. It was easier for children to break common sense.

“Will Dokja-ssi keep staying with us?”

“Ah, that...”

“Dokja-ssi.”

It wasn't Lee Hyunsung who called out to me. I looked back and saw Cheon Inho from the mainstream group. Yes, I thought he would be back soon.

“Can I talk with you for a while?”

Bang Cheolsoo was missing some teeth and glaring at me from behind Cheon Inho. He stared at me before turning his head away. A foolish fellow.

“Okay, let's talk.”

I nodded and Cheon Inho spoke with a satisfied expression.

“Then can the rest of you vacate this place for a moment? I want to talk to Dokja-ssi alone.”

“Ah, that...”

“No, you don’t have to go. You can listen.”

Cheon Inho’s eyes twitched at my words. Lee Hyunsung stopped as he was about to retreat.

“Hmmm, is that so? Well... I don’t care.”

He acted like they were free to listen. Cheon Inho wiped the bench and sat down. Men from the Cheoldoo Group appeared on both sides of him and handed him a cigarette and lighter. He had seen too many movies.

“You seem to have a nature that dislikes cumbersome things, so I will get to the point.”

“Yes.”

“Join our group.”

It was an expected offer.

“I can offer Dokja-ssi a high position in our group. I want to lead the group together with you.”

“Why me?”

“Shouldn’t you know why?”

Cheon Inho glanced towards the injured Cheoldoo Group members.

“Dokja-ssi is a hero who saved people from monsters. A hero needs such a place.”

It was an interesting way of thinking. He would take advantage of my presence.

“And if I refuse?”

“Refuse? How interesting. I never thought about that.” Cheon Inho blew out cigarette smoke towards me. “Dokja-ssi, this isn’t a favour. You have a duty to do this. Can’t you see the poor people here?”

People were looking this way with scruffy faces. There were crying children and tired elderly people.

“It isn’t a big story. I am asking you to work together for survival. Dokja-ssi, don’t you have the strength?”

“What exactly do you want?”

“I need someone to be a hitman.”

Hitman?

“Until a few days ago, there was someone else doing the job. He procured food alone and hunted in the tunnels. To be exact, we took it one-sidedly.”

I didn’t need to ask.

This was the story of Yoo Jonghyuk.

“But he suddenly left last night.”

“So you need someone to replace him?”

“I think your strength is proven with Cheolsoo-ssi.”

Lee Hyunsung and Jung Heewon’s eyes widened. Now they noticed what was going on.

“It isn’t bad for Dokja-ssi. You are the hero of the people and will be the leader of the group with us. Everyone will like you and also...”

“I’m sorry but I can’t be responsible for anyone. I don’t want to join your group.”

“Hrmm. Is that so?”

“Above all, the way you run the group doesn’t fit me.”

I looked at the health members of the Cheoldoo Group and the sickly-looking members of the marginalized group. In particular, Jung Heewon was looking at the Cheon Inho as if he was her mortal enemy.

“Is that so? It is fine. But if you change your mind, come back anytime.”

“That will not happen.”

“Haha, it remains to be seen.”

It didn't take long to find out what Cheon Inho's words meant.

As the members of the Cheoldoo Group retreated, the other group members approached as if they had been waiting. It was the people of the marginalized group. They grabbed me and raised their voices.

“Hey, is the rumour true?”

“Are you really monopolizing the food?”

“Are you going to eat it all when there is enough to share with everyone?”

“We are all staying here! Why are you the only one to have it?”

“Leave the food to Inho-ssi! He will distribute it fairly!”

I knew what was going on. I could see the smiling face of Cheon Inho in the rear of the people. His lips were moving.

‘Choose.’

Would I give food and become the hero? Or would I be the villain and monopolize it alone?

If I chose to be the hero, I would fall into Cheon Inho's game. After the food was distributed, I would have to hunt for food with the group members and would someday get stabbed in the back.

On the other hand, I would be isolated in a group in a moment if I monopolized the food alone.

[The eyes of a few constellations are shining.]

[The constellation ‘Secretive Plotter’ has snorted.]

As the people became heated up, Cheon Inho came forward.

“Ahh, everyone. Calm down. There seems to be a misunderstanding. Kim Dokja-ssi isn’t such a person.”

What was this? A decoy?

“Kim Dokja-ssi decided to work with us. The food he brought today will be left to the mainstream group and will be shared fairly. He also promised to continue to work with us—”

Of course, he believed I would choose him. It was hard to listen anymore.

“Stop.”

I worried about it for a short moment. What would Yoo Jonghyuk do? Ah, that’s it. The answer was that he wasn’t here right now.

But I wasn’t Yoo Jonghyuk.

“Of course I will give out food.” I saw Cheon Inho’s lips curve upwards. But people should listen to the end. “However, it isn’t for free.”

Unlike Yoo Jonghyuk, I wouldn’t throw everything away to move forward. But I wouldn’t be responsible for everyone. Food was given but it wouldn’t be for free.

People were puzzled as if they didn’t understand the words.

“W-Wait a minute! It isn’t free?”

“I’ll tell you. I don’t intend to monopolize the food. But I won’t give food to Cheon Inho’s group. I’m not UNICEF and I don’t trust them.”

I smiled at Cheon Inho.

“I will make a deal with you. I will sell you the food for a fair price.”

“S-Sell?”

“What...?”

“Uh, how much... money?”

In the distance, I could see Cheon Inho's face stiffening. I laugh as I faced him.

"No, I only accept coins."



After a while, only the people in the marginalized group with a relationship with me returned.

"That... D-Dokja-ssi. Is this a good choice?"

"Sheesh, is there anything free in life? Dokja-ssi, you said it well. I feel refreshed."

Jung Heewon dismissed Lee Hyunsung's concern. After I made the 'trade' declaration, many citizens turned away from me. Maybe they were disappointed.

"I agree with Heewon-ssi. The people here are too tame to the mainstream group."

"That's right. The sons of bitches... Gumho Station is currently in their palms. People are treated as cattle and are sometimes taken to a slaughterhouse. Just like myself this morning."

Jung Heewon's body trembled.

In fact, it wasn't me but the mainstream group monopolizing the food. They monopolized the food on the pretext of 'fair distribution' and feed it to the tamed people.

Humans were the weakest when they believed someone protected them. Once authority was established in a one-sided relationship, people started to depend on them.

"I agree. That's why I believe that Dokja-ssi's declaration today was very meaningful. People need to have the will to do something on their own. However..."

Lee Hyunsung looked towards the food.

"Not even one was sold. 50 coins for one, isn't this price too expensive? Why don't you make it 10 coins like you did with us...?"

It wasn't unreasonable to think so. People only paid attention to the mainstream group and showed no signs of looking this way. People still needed time.

I responded calmly.

"Let's wait a little longer."

Then night came.

The sound of huge monsters was heard intermittently from the ground and people often had nightmares. Lee Gilyoung and Yoo Sangah fell asleep first while Jung Heewon was dozing off.

"Dokja-ssi should sleep as well. I will stand vigil."

"Nope. It is okay. Lee Hyunsung-ssi can sleep first."

"But you will be tired."

"I have work to do."

"Work to do?"

I pointed behind Lee Hyunsung. Surprisingly, there were the shadows of people. It wasn't just one.

"That... are you still trading the food?"

Finally, the people started to move.

# Chapter 18

## Line of Hypocrisy (4)

The next morning, I was almost out of supplies. Jung Heewon stared at the convenience store bags as if she couldn't believe it.

"Oh my god, it is sold out?"

"Yes."

"Ha, really funny. Everyone was just watching and now..."

"Nope, it isn't just the marginalized group."

The guests who came in the middle of the night weren't just members of the marginalized group.

"Kim Dokja-ssi, you are making the worst choice."

Among them was Cheon Inho.

"You will regret it."

More than half the food I had was taken by the mainstream group. Of course, they paid the exact amount.

Jung Heewon was in a rage after hearing the story.

"Wait a minute. Then the mainstream group will just monopolize the food again?"

"Something like that."

"No, what is this? Weren't you going to weaken the power of the mainstream group by promoting transactions among the people?"

It was unexpected insight. I responded with a bit of admiration.

“That’s correct. That was the intent. I wanted people to move voluntarily.”

“Then why did you sell food to the mainstream group? The situation won’t change!”

“It has changed. I have obtained coins.”

“Huh?”

It was 1,450 coins. It was a huge income for one night.

“No... what is Dokja-ssi thinking? Sangah-ssi, can we really trust this man?”

Yoo Sangah flinched as attention suddenly turned to her but then she smiled brightly.

“I believe in him.”

It was burdensome.

“Dokja-ssi, did you leave enough food for yourself?”

“Nope, I sold it.”

Jung Heewon’s mouth fell open as if she was dumbfounded. At that time, someone poked my cheek. I turned my head and found a biscuit.

“Huh? You want me to eat it?”

*Nod nod.* The head moved cutely. I smiled, took the biscuit and put it in Lee Gilyoung’s mouth.

“I’m okay. You eat it. Ah, I should tell you something... everyone, do you still have the food you ate yesterday?”

“Yes, I have it.”

“I have a bit left.”

“Why? Do you want to buy it back? I will sell it.” Jung Heewon waved the biscuit in a playful manner.

“No, you should eat it now.”

“Huh?”

“Eat it all before today. You should do it.” I repeatedly stressed. “Or you will regret it.”

“Why... no, wait a minute. Sangah-ssi, what are you doing now? Why are you listening to him?”

“There is a reason why Dokja-ssi would say this.”

Yoo Sangah smiled sweetly and opened a bag of biscuits. Lee Hyunsung was confused but ate the food. Meanwhile, Lee Gilyoung had eaten it the moment I spoke. He was a good listener.

“Ah well... I will leave one back.”

“I won’t stop you.”

I shrugged at Jung Heewon’s words. It was up to her to regret it.

At lunch time, there was a major announcement from the mainstream group. Cheon Inho stood on a platform surrounded by people and said.

“We will limit the food ration from today. The allocation is three biscuits per person. And—”

People became irritated before the speech was over.

“What? Three biscuits? How can we live on that?”

“That’s right! Don’t the scouts get more food? Do you think we don’t know?”

Despite being cursed at, Cheon Inho just laughed calmly.

“Your words are good. Yes. The scouts receive more rations. If you want food, please apply to be a scout.”

“Very few people have come back after applying to be a scout! The Cheoldoo Group members are the ones who always come back!”

“Do you want us to die now?”

Cheon Inho was nonchalant despite the violence reactions of the citizens.

“Those people were just unlucky. You know that it is terribly dangerous outside. Why don’t you obtain food yourself if you are dissatisfied?”

“T-That...”

The people closed their mouths dumbly. If they went out now, they would die. Everyone knew this.

Cheon Inho wasn’t finished.

“Ah, there is a way to get food without being a scout.”

“What is it?”

“A deal. We will be happy to exchange food for anything we determine to be of value. Every person can give something different. Isn’t that right?”

Cheon Inho’s cold gaze caused the people to tremble. It was mostly the people who came to me yesterday and bought food.

[The character ‘Cheon Inho’ has activated the ‘Incite Lv. 2’ skill.

“Originally, I wasn’t going to do this. But yesterday, Kim Dokja-ssi told me something nice. That’s right everyone. Is there anything free in the world? If you want food, you have to prove your worth. This is the way it is. Haha, thank you for telling me something good. Kim Dokja-ssi.”

...Look at this?

At this moment, everyone’s attention was focused on me. Their eyes were mostly filled with resentment.

“Because of that bastard...”

People wanted to be stupid and Cheon Inho had the ‘Incite’ skill. It was a skill that most good group leaders would have. But this way, the hostility would turn towards

me again...

I looked at the back of Cheon Inho. It was a cute level. At least compared to the people at Chungmuro and Seoul Station.

The people gathered in front of the podium were already trying to bargain.

“I-I will buy it with coins. How much do you want?”

“200 coins.”

“Huh? But I don’t have that many coins.”

“Then go away.”

200 coins for one piece of food. Even the dokkaebi was likely to pass out.

One of the Cheoldoo Group selling food saw my look and trembled. He had a bandage around his thigh and seemed to be one of the guys I beat up yesterday.

“Did I ever say thank you for yesterday?”

I suddenly turned my head and saw Jung Heewon standing nearby.

“I think I heard it.”

“Still, I want to thank you again.”

I wanted to say something but Jung Heewon’s eyes were fixed on the injured Cheoldoo member.

“The one with the injured leg, he was the one who tried to rape me yesterday.”

“...I see.”

“Don’t touch him because I will kill him myself. Understood?”

Her killing intent was impressive. Was she chosen by a sponsor or was it a late blooming attribute?

[The exclusive skill, Character List is activated.]

I was a little worried about using this skill. This woman would've died if I hadn't saved her. Would she be registered as a character?

[Character Information]

Name: Jung Heewon

Age: 27 years old.

Constellation Sponsor: None (Three constellations are currently showing interest in this person).

Private Attribute: Crouching Figure (General)

Exclusive skills: Demon Slayer Lv. 1, Kendo Lv. 1.

Stigmata: None

Overall Stats: Stamina Lv. 4, Strength Lv. 4, Agility Lv. 7, Magic Power Lv. 4.

Overall Evaluation: She was a 'crouching figure' with enormous potential. The attribute information wasn't verified yet because the attribute hadn't blossomed.

Fortunately, her information appeared. It was different from Yoo Sangah, Lee Gilyoung and Han Myungoh. Was she originally not abandoned? By the way, it was a very interesting exclusive attribute.

'Crouching figure.'

It didn't seem big based on the name, but it was one of the few 'super evolutionary' attributes in Ways of Destruction. 'Crouching Figure' was a general rated attribute, but it could reach a rare or legendary rating depending on the occasion.

One of the 100 strongest people in Ways of Survival, the Crazy Butcher evolved from 'Crouching Figure.'

Jung Heewon I thought she was just a passing person but I might have to consider taking her as a colleague.

It would take a while to grow her 'Demon Slaying' skill but this woman could become a powerful hitman if she was raised well.

"By the way, Dokja-ssi is very calm."

Calm... It might seem like that.

“I am familiar with situations like this in the novel.”

“Huh? Does that make sense... Wait a minute. Where are you going?”

I didn't answer and descended from the platform. Jung Heewon wanted to come with me and I reached out a hand to stop her.

“It's okay.”

Jung Heewon landed lightly below the platform.

I walked along the railway tracks and watched the tunnel road to Yaksu Station. It was filled with thick darkness and the inside wasn't visible, but it smelt terrible. It was a bloody smell.

“You aren't going inside are you?”

Jung Heewon asked.

“Everyone who went that way has died. The thugs or anyone else. Everyone who goes inside will unconditionally die.”

Her words were wrong. Not everyone died. At least one person had already gone down this road and moved onto the next station.

We climbed onto the platform again. We had been gone for quite a time but the line of people to trade food was still long.

Some people who protested against the mainstream group were beaten up and other paid unusual prices for the food.

Shortly afterwards, Jung Heewon saw a few young women from the marginalized group sneak into the back of a tarp and she became furious.

“Ah, really annoying. Did you see that?”

“I saw it.”

Cheon Inho had said it. ‘Anything’ could be exchanged for food. But the girls who just entered weren't carrying anything.

Jung Heewon sprang to her feet.

“I can’t just watch this.”

“What will you do?”

“Stop it. I have to tell them not to do it, no matter the circumstances!”

“Then those women will starve.”

“Are you just going to watch?”

“Yes, I think you should just watch this time.”

“What do you mean by that?”

I silently received Jung Heewon’s contemptuous gaze.

“Jung Heewon-ssi, stopping those women won’t solve the current problem. Even if you stop them now, something similar will occur late at night.”

“...Then I will stop them again. I will stop it and stop it.”

“Then what about their food? Among those who just entered the tarp, there is a mother with a child. If that child starves to death, will Jung Heewon-ssi be responsible for the child’s death?”

Jung Heewon’s eyes shook. She bowed her head as if to hide her expression.

“...Then what can I do? The alternative...”

I looked up at Jung Heewon.

With this, Jung Heewon wouldn’t do anything unexpected. She was a ‘Crouching Figure’ with ‘Demon Slaying.’ Depending on how she acted, Jung Heewon might evolve into an indiscriminate murderer.

“Jung Heewon-ssi, the key to this problem is food. Isn’t that right?”

“...That’s right.”

“Then we need to remove the cause of the problem.”

“Huh...?”

I looked at my watch instead of answering. It was time.

*Kwajijjik!*

Yes, he showed up. The air split apart and a familiar figure was revealed. Screams came from everywhere. The nightmare of humanity that opened up this tragedy.

[H-How are you all doing? Haven't you been free for a while?]

The dokkaebi.

“A-Aaaagh!”

The people panicked at the appearance of the dokkaebi. It was never a good thing when this guy showed up. Even Jung Heewon, who was full of energy, flinched momentarily.

By the way, it wasn't Bihyung. Originally, Bihyung was the dokkaebi responsible for all nearby channels. But this guy was different. Unlike the pure white fur of Bihyung, this dokkaebi had black fur.

[M-My friend who was originally in charge of this channel is undergoing disciplinary action... S-So, I am responsible for this scenario.]

The dokkaebi's timid tone was very memorable.

[T-Then everyone. D-Don't you look very peaceful? T-That Bihyung, he pretended to be pretentious only to set this level of scenario difficulty...]

“W-What are you saying? Tell us what you want!”

[H-Hik. Don't be angry. Everyone. A-Anyway, I came for you guys...]

“For us?”

“T-Then give us food!”

[F-Food? Aha... if you want food...]

After his words ended, the dokkaebi moved his hand.

[A scenario penalty has been added.]

[From now on, food stockpiling is limited.]

[All existing stockpiled food has disappeared.]

“U-Uhh! What?”

The people with emergency food screamed. Whether it was from the mainstream group or marginalized group, everything that was called ‘food’ floated in the air.

[He, hehe. Then everyone. You can’t. Y-You have to think about how to break the scenario.]

*Susuk.*

The canned food, biscuits, calorie bars, etc. The emergency food gathered by the people were destroyed with one gesture from the dokkaebi. The people’s expressions became grim when they saw the food disappearing.

[Y-You want to eat? In any case, Earth trash...]

His tone suddenly changed. I seemed to remember his name. According to the original setting, there was one dokkaebi like this. His tone was timid but he was crueller than any dokkaebi.

In the distance, Cheon Inho was watching me with confused eyes.

[Everyone, let’s have fun from now on. Hehe...]

It was followed by system messages.

[A scenario penalty has been added.]

[The ‘survival cost’ clause has been added.]

[From now on, 100 coins will be deducted every night for the ‘survival cost’. If you can’t pay the ‘survival cost’, you will die.]

[The ‘survival cost’ penalty will be maintained until the second main scenario is cleared.]

I laughed as I read the rising messages. Yes, now it was like Ways of Survival.

# Chapter 19

## Shadow Keeper (1)

[T-Then I will let everyone take care of it! Yihihit!]

The dokkaebi said these words and disappeared.

A food penalty and survival penalty. I already knew about the former penalty. However, the latter wasn't in the original Ways of Survival. Maybe my contract with Bihyung caused this development.

Jung Heewon confirmed that the biscuit in her pocket had disappeared and asked in a soft voice.

"Dokja-ssi, did you perhaps know something like this would hap—"

"I did expect it. I thought about what the dokkaebis would do first to harass humans."

"...Aren't you really good at making predictions?"

I called Lee Hyunsung and the others over. The situation was created and now it was time to move.

"Give back our food!"

"How, how did this happen?"

The people of the marginalized group were crying. Cheon Inho and the mainstream group were also devastated by the sudden food shortage. My eyes met Cheon Inho's, who bit his lip.

[Perhaps... were you aware of it? No, that is impossible.]

If I could read his thoughts then that's what he would be thinking.

[You have accurately read the thoughts of character 'Cheon Inho.']

[Your understanding of the character 'Cheon Inho' has increased.]

...My understanding rose from this sort of thing?

I looked at other people's expressions and tried to guess what they were thinking. But the previous messages didn't pop up.

Meanwhile, Cheon Inho quickly gathered the people together in order to organize the chaos.

"Everyone, gather together. I will give you an emergency notice."

The contents of the notice were simple: *The situation had become worse so more 'scouts' from the marginalized group was needed. They had to hurry. Now there was no food underground.*

"We won't distribute food to people who don't participate as scouts."

Despite the hardline declaration, there was no backlash from the citizens. No, they couldn't. It was an inevitable result in this situation. The people noticed it and volunteered to be scouts one by one.

Despite the disappearance of the food, hope remained on Cheon Inho's face. As the situation became worse, more control was passed onto the mainstream group.

Lee Hyunsung became anxious when he saw this and opened his mouth.

"Dokja-ssi, what now?"

"Of course, we have to go and get food."

The expressions of the party members became tense at these words. Obtain food. This meant only one thing.

"Then we have to be scouts? There is still food remaining aboveground."

"Nope, we won't go aboveground. If we go there, we will unconditionally die."

I looked at a gas mask on the floor. This tattered gas mask couldn't stop the poisonous fog.

“But we need to obtain food aboveground...”

“Lee Hyunsung-ssi. The world has changed. Then the food needs to change.”

I looked at the tunnel to Yaksu Station.

“Wait a minute. Dokja-ssi... don’t tell me?”

“That’s right.”

In this world, humans were no longer the top predators. Even if we weren’t predators, we didn’t necessarily have to be prey.

“We will hunt monsters.”



After a while, several people from the marginalized group, including myself, were standing in front of the tunnel towards Yaksu Station.

“I see. You are going to enter the railway track?”

I thought Cheon Inho would challenge us when we refused to join the scouting group, but he seemed relieved that I was out of the group. He might think I was a threat to his own power.

“Well, looking at it in the long run, a team dedicated to attacking the scenario is required. Come back safely.”

He was a funny guy. He spoke like he was the captain. But the time for him to be finished wasn’t far off.

[Your understanding of the character ‘Cheon Inho’ has increased.]

[Your understanding of the character ‘Cheon Inho’ has reached a certain level.]

I see... I got it now. There were two major cases of character ‘understanding’ rising.

One was when I got the liking or trust of the character. The second was when I accurately guessed what the character was thinking. Maybe now was the latter case.

[The character 'Cheon Inho' is suspicious of you.]

According to the accumulated understanding value, a vague idea of the person's emotions could be obtained.

"Oh, can one of my group members join? I'd like to get some information on the attack."

Indeed, Cheon Inho wouldn't let us go so easily. I stared at the man behind him. It was the person who would go with us and an unlucky fellow.

"I-I have to go with them?"

"Eh, why else are you here, Han hyung? Didn't you want to reconcile with Dokja-ssi last night?"

"T-That..."

Cheon Inho's party member who joined us was Department Head Han Myungoh.

"D-Dokja-ssi." If you don't mind, I will go..."

"I understand. Let's go together."

Han Myungoh was surprised when I responded readily. He thought I would refuse. Lee Hyunsung had a worried face but I had an idea.

In any case, the survivors party of five people from Carriage 3807, consisting of me, Lee Hyunsung, Lee Gilyoung, Yoo Sangah and Han Myungoh was reformed.

"Can I come as well?"

"...Is it okay even if your body isn't fully healed?"

"This much is fine."

There was one more. Including Jung Heewon, there was a total of six people in the party. It was a lot for a small number.

*Grrr...*

Of course, the number of people wasn't much in front of the upcoming crisis.

[A new sub scenario has arrived!]

+

[Second Scenario – Food Acquisition]

Category: Sub

Difficulty: E

Clear Conditions: Directly hunt the monsters that can be used as food and cook them.

Time Limit: None

Compensation: 500 coins

Failure: ???

+

As soon as they stepped foot in the tunnel, a sub scenario flew in.

Food acquisition. It was a sub scenario we had to go through before entering the second main scenario.

[A few constellations are anticipating your performance.]

The darkness of the tunnel became apparent before we even moved 10 steps. I lit up the tunnel with a flashlight but the outline of the surrounding area wasn't visible at all.

It was proof of a curtain that was blocking the light. The real thing would be beyond this curtain.

“Dokja-ssi, wait a minute. It is really dangerous from here on.”

Jung Heewon, who walked beside me, stopped first.

“Are we really going this way? No matter how I look, it seems like suicide. There is also Gilyoung.”

“In fact, I was concerned from the beginning. It isn't too late so how about we leave Gilyoung behind? And if possible, the women...”

“Lee Hyunsung-ssi, I'm not as good as you but I know how to fight. I took some kendo lessons.”

“But...”

An unnecessary controversy was about to heat up the atmosphere so I interrupted.

“Lee Hyunsung-ssi. I told you before. The world has changed. It is biased that a woman is physically weak. Right now, everyone can become stronger by raising their stats. But Jung Heewon-ssi, there is also a problem with your words.”

“...What is it?”

“Just as a woman isn’t weak, a child also isn’t weak. Gilyoung, show them.”

Lee Gilyoung came forward. He looked around for a while before sitting on the tunnel floor and reaching out his hand. Jung Heewon’s eyes widened.

“Oh my god, what is that?”

“S-Shit! Cockroaches!”

Han Myungoh cried out with fear.

The cockroach that appeared in the distance was connected to Lee Gilyoung’s fingertips with a faint solid line. The cockroach listened to Lee Gilyoung’s words like a well-behaved dog and disappeared into the darkness.

“My attribute is Insect Collector.”

Insect Collector. Lee Gilyoung possessed the rare ability to communicate simply with insects through his ‘Diverse Communication’ skill.

“This is nothing in front of us. It is safe for 100 steps forward.”

Lee Gilyoung showed an overwhelming scouting power and the other people made a stunned expression. Lee Gilyoung spoke to them with a bold expression.

“Thank you for your concern. But I didn’t follow all of you for you to take care of me.”

“Ah, yes.”

Jung Heewon nodded with a sour expression. Lee Gilyoung came to my side and I

stroked his hair.

Lee Gilyoung's attribute hadn't been seen in the original Ways of Survival. It wasn't a wrong choice to save Lee Gilyoung in the beginning. We passed a clear barrier and entered the full-fledged darkness.

[You have entered a dangerous area.]

"Y-Yoo Sangah-ssi. It is dangerous to hold my hand while walking."

"...Aren't you more afraid than I am?"

"N-No!"

The air inside the curtain was sticky from the humidity.

"Reduce the light."

Yoo Sangah immediately covered the flashlight. Since this model didn't have a light control function, she had to adjust the light with her hand.

"Ouch. Don't shine it downwards."

Jung Heewon felt nauseous when she checked the ground. There were torn bodies. The bodies of those who tried to move through here were arranged at their feet.

Yoo Sangah closed her eyes tightly, Han Myungoh shook and even the bold Lee Hyunsung started sweating.

Lee Gilyoung was surprisingly calm, with not the slightest bit of fear on his face. I felt a bit worried. This guy, did he think it was all a game?

"There is something that isn't human."

As Lee Gilyoung said, it wasn't only the bodies of humans on the ground. There was something the size of a fully-grown wolf. The bodies of the mole-like creatures were scattered all over the place.

The 9th grade underground species, the ground rat. It was a name reminiscent of bug on Earth, but a name was just a name. They were underground piranhas. The ground

rats were persistent hunters who burrowed through the ground in groups and aimed at their prey.

However, the ground rats collapsed like they had received a bombardment. Jung Heewon sighed.

“...Who the hell did this?”

Obviously, there was only one human who could turn the ground rats into this. Yoo Jonghyuk. He proceeded to the next station through this path alone.

But I couldn't help wondering. Originally, it was supposed to be tonight or tomorrow when the third turn Yoo Jonghyuk moved to the next station.

Why was he so hasty? Did he become impatient? What was the reason?

“Dokja-ssi, can we use this for food?”

“The scenario said that we have to ‘hunt’ it ourselves so maybe it isn't possible.”

“...Well, it is kind of uncomfortable. What about cooking? Do you want to bake it on a fire?”

It could be baked. The problem was that it must be a special fire.

“Heewon-ssi, you said you were good at kendo?”

“Uh, it is a bit much to say I am good... but what are you doing now?”

I stabbed the body of the ground rat and started to cut it with a knife. I didn't know when I read it in the novel but it didn't go as well as I thought.

After somehow getting rid of the tough skin, I managed to remove the spine bones. This was the first time so I left many scratches, but it was useable.

“Why are you taking that?”

“You need a weapon for kendo.”

The stone hog's thorn wasn't enough but the spine of the ground rat consisted of a

single bone, making it a pretty good weapon at the beginning of the scenario.

After cutting the cartilage leading to the leg and shaping it, the bone actually took the shape of a knife. I gave it to Jung Heewon.

“Thank you. Suddenly I feel like I’m back to the Paleolithic age.”

“You need to grind it a bit more for it to be useful. There are rocks around so skillfully grind the blade.

“Huhu, understood. Captain.”

Jung Heewon started to grind the blade with a slightly excited voice. I looked up and saw Lee Hyunsung watching the scene with a bit of envy.

“Do you want one?”

“Eh, you will make me one?”

“All of you come closer. It is better if you learn how to do it. Let’s make it together.”

In fact, this was also my first time trying it. I wouldn’t have been able to do it if the details hadn’t been included in Ways of Survival.

Why wasn’t Ways of Survival popular? It was simple. The author wrote too much of the setting.

“...Dokja-ssi, you are a beginner but you are good at it.”

We sat down and made weapons together. This time it was a spear, not a sword. They didn’t have the Kendo skill so I decided it was more stable to make a long spear.

Lee Hyunsung’s spear was made with the spine of the largest ground rat while Yoo Sangah and Han Myungoh’s weapons were made with the spine of average sized ground rats. Finally, Lee Gilyoung’s weapon was made with the head bone of a young ground rat.

[You have succeeded in acquiring weapons by yourself.]

[A very small number of constellations are interested in the primitive nature of humanity.]

[The constellations have sponsored you 100 coins.]

Everyone received these messages.

“We receive coins even for this type of thing.”

“I don’t want you to die. You have your own coins?”

“Yes, we do.”

“Whenever possible, leave enough coins for the survival cost and invest the rest in your strength, stamina and agility. Otherwise, you won’t survive.”

“Ah, I’ll keep that in mind.”

We finished the preparations and started to move forward again. The 100 steps that Lee Gilyoung mentioned was right in front of us now.

[The sub scenario – Food Acquisition has begun!]

The ground rats crawled out from the ground. I quickly counted the numbers. One, two, three... there were exactly 13. It was more than I thought.

*Grrr...*

The group of land rats drew a line and started threatening us. The moment we crossed the line, the fight would begin.

“There is no plan. We are beginners. It might sound cruel but honestly, I don’t expect you to survive.”

“T-That...”

“Still, all of you survive. Please.”

Han Myungoh was the only upset one in the party. Everyone else was nervous but looked determined. In particular, Jung Heewon’s eyes were very impressive.

“Okay, let’s try it. Everybody, please live!”

Just as Yoo Jonghyuk tested me, I also had expectations for them. No matter how good a mentor, a person who wasn't determined couldn't survive in this world.

In the end, it was up to a person to save themselves. Everyone should use this opportunity to realize it clearly.

"Then let's go."

I also knew who I must take among these people.

As we took one more step, the ground rats moved. The battle began.

# Chapter 20

## Shadow Keeper (2)

The party fought well. It was actually a little bit surprising. In particular, Lee Hyunsung and Jung Heewon who stepped forward with me were very influential.

The battle composition naturally became the three of us in front with the other three in the rear. Less than a minute after the battle began, a few ground rats were stuck on the ground with their necks pierced.

Lee Hyunsung overpowered another ground rat, wiped the sweat on his forehead and said.

“...I think I can live.”

Once they raised their overall stats, the human race wasn't that weak.

Even so, Lee Hyunsung's mentality was very special in this world. A normal human couldn't be so nonchalant when encountering monsters.

There was a reason why he got the name of Steel Sword in the future. However, the more amazing person was Jung Heewon.

“The pattern is simpler than I thought?”

Maybe it was due to the Kendo skill but every time her sword stretched out, the ground rat was cut somewhere on their legs or tail.

“Hap!”

It was a case where Jung Heewon invested most of her coins into strength. Her endurance declined due to it but the power of one blow was better than I thought.

*Hwiik!*

Her sword moved in a terrifying manner through the air.

“Damn, I lost one! Please!”

Her voice trembled as she spoke. Her only weakness was that her stamina was low so her endurance fell.

*Grrr!*

The ground rats who moved between the party members were moderately smart. After succeeding in scattering the ranks, they ran towards the opponent who seemed the weakest using a hunter's instincts.

“Leave it to me.”

However, the ground rats didn't know that they had picked the wrong opponent.

*Peeok!*

A blunt instrument thrown by Lee Gilyoung's hands struck the head of a ground rat. The impact was lacking because he was a child but it was enough. The others could help him finish it.

*Puok!*

Yoo Sangah's spear pierced the body of the ground rat. The ground rat twisted several times. Yoo Sangah made a confused expression but she didn't remove her hand from the spear.

The ground rat lost its energy and fell down.

I honestly thought it would be difficult for Yoo Sangah to adapt but I was really surprised. Usually, it was normal to panic like Han Myungoh standing over here.

“U-Uhhhh...”

As the people were struggling, one person was hiding in the rear. He couldn't even hide properly and was bleeding near the shins.

I pierced the last ground rat with the thorn and the surroundings became quiet.

I shook the blood off the thorn and looked at everyone. Everyone suffered from minor

abrasions except for Han Myungoh, but there were no major injuries.

It was a great first victory.

Yoo Sangah and Lee Gilyoung relaxed and sat down, while Lee Hyunsung stabbed his spear into the ground and wiped at the sweat on his forehead. Jung Heewon lamented as she countered the number of ground rats in the vicinity.

“...Dokja-ssi, how many did you take care of?”

“Four of them.”

“Che, I killed two.”

“I got three.”

My pride was somehow hurt when I heard Lee Hyunsung’s proud declaration. There was only one difference despite my stats. I used a skill and looked at Lee Hyunsung’s attributes window.

+

[Character Information]

Name: Lee Hyunsung

Age: 28 years old.

Constellation Sponsor: Master of Steel.

Private Attribute: Soldier who Turned a Blind Eye to Injustice (General)

Exclusive Skills: Bayonet Skills Lv. 2, Camouflage Lv. 1, Patience Lv. 1, Sense of Justice Lv. 1, Weapons Training Lv. 2.

Stigma: Great Mountain Push Lv. 1

Overall Stats: Stamina Lv. 12, Strength Lv. 9, Agility Lv. 9, Magic Power Lv. 6.

Overall Evaluation: The moment of the attribute evolution is gradually approaching. The person’s trust in you is considerable. The sponsor behind him is wary towards you.

\* ‘Starter Pack’ is currently applied.

+

Hah, the starter pack. This was why he was strong. The Master of Steel seemed to quite like Lee Hyunsung.

The Starter Pack was a coin package that could be used when the average overall stats

of the incarnation was less than level 10.

It was a good item that allowed you to learn Weapons Training, a useful skill in the beginning, while raising the level of the overall stats by one.

Considering the fact that most incarnations were being exploited for nothing, Lee Hyunsung was lucky to receive the Starter Pack.

“Dokja-ssi, your complexion doesn’t look good...”

“Ah, no. I was just thinking for a moment.”

Now I was a little bit envious... well, I had the money to buy it. I didn’t buy it. My average stats exceeded level 10 so buying it would only damage me.

Damn, I opened the Dokkaebi Bag a bit early.

“Let’s gather up the ground rats. We need to prepare today’s food.”

“Ummm... by the way, how will we cook it? We can’t eat it like this.”

“We can’t eat it now but there will be a way.”

I guessed I answered too calmly. There was silence among my party members. Lee Hyunsung was the first one to open his mouth.

“Excuse me, I would like to ask you one thing.”

“Yes?”

“Dokja-ssi, perhaps... do you know something about this situation?”

Whoops, I made a mistake.

“That...”

Suddenly, I remembered the regressors in the novel I read, followed by Yoo Jonghyuk’s words.

It was like this. The feeling of a regressor. Usually, these types of things happened to a

regressor.

Some replies came to mind. I could shamelessly say that it was a hunch or I could lie like Yoo Jonghyuk.

[The constellation Secretive Plotter is anticipating your choice.]

[A few constellations are anticipating your answer.]

But from a reader's point of view, the best answer was...

"A-Aaaack!"

It was to create a situation where I didn't need to say anything.

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' nods at your choice.]

"There is still one left!"

Jung Heewon shouted and Lee Hyunsung ran. However, the action of the hidden ground rats was faster than anyone else. It was much bigger than the other creatures.

"S-Save me...!"

It dragged Han Myungoh into a tunnel by one of his legs. The nearest Yoo Sangah swung her spear but the situation got worse because Han Myungoh held onto her.

"Grab this!"

Lee Hyunsung stretched out the handle of his spear but it only hit the ground. The ground rat and the two people had already disappeared into the ground.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' resents this frustrating person.]

Jung Heewon burst out.

"Ah... I knew I was going to get cancer because of that uncle."

"...I'm sorry. I was too late."

Lee Hyunsung spoke in a sad voice. I tapped his shoulder to show it was okay.

“No one could’ve done anything.”

“Should we chase after them?”

I looked at the hole where they had disappeared. It wasn’t an ordinary hole. There was a touch of energy around it. The darkness gave off a gloomy feeling.

I retreated to the back and turned on my smartphone. There was only 5% battery remaining. At dawn, I exchanged one battery charge for food with a person from the marginalized group.

[Your reading speed has increased due to the effect of the exclusive attribute.]

Shortly afterwards, I was able to find the desired passage.

{... The ‘Edge of Darkness’ is the habitat of the ground rats and is a type of subspace emitted from the ‘Dark Root.’ The ground rats that breath in black ether instead of oxygen don’t grow naturally unless they are near the ‘Edge of Darkness’...}

It was a fact that I knew roughly but it was meaningful to review it. That’s right. This was the entrance to the Edge of Darkness. I read about it and put the smartphone in my pocket.

“Dokja-ssi?”

Lee Hyunsung was looking at me with a frustrated expression. I nodded.

“We will enter.”

“Ah, then...”

“But it very dangerous to enter with a lot of people. Lee Hyunsung-ssi and Jung Heewon-ssi will wait here at the boundary. If something happens, I will give you a signal.”

The startled Jung Heewon asked.

“Surely... you don’t intend to go with only Gilyoung?”

“Gilyoung’s ability will be helpful in pursuing them.”

The moment she tried to strongly resist, I raised a hand and called to Lee Hyunsung.

“Lee Hyunsung-ssi. Jung Heewon-ssi isn’t in a good condition so please take care of her.”

Lee Hyunsung seemed to realize something.

“I understand.”

“Wait a minute. I am fine!”

“Jung Heewon, confidence is good but don’t be reckless.”

“..”

Jung Heewon’s breathing was uneven. She wasn’t completely healed from the poisonous fog.

I left the two people and entered the hole with Lee Gilyoung. It was obviously a hole that was dug down in a vertical slope. But as soon as we entered, we could stand as if gravity was in effect.

It was due to the magic power emitted by the Edge of Darkness.

“This way.”

The darkness was so deep that I couldn’t see anything, so I could only move forward with Lee Gilyoung. Black ether had the property of absorbing light, making a flashlight meaningless. If Lee Gilyoung’s ability Diverse Communication wasn’t available, I might have to use coins again.

“Excuse me Hyung.”

Lee Gilyoung called out to me.

“Did you do it on purpose?”

“..What?”

“When that uncle grabbed Noona and Ahjussi, you let it go.”

I had a moment of hesitation. In the darkness, Lee Gilyoung's fingertips were strange. Before I could ask how he knew, Lee Gilyoung spoke.

"At that time, I was looking at Hyung's face."

He was watching me even in those short moments. A very scary kid. It was no good hiding from a person who was so quick.

"Yes, that's right."

The answer was terrible and a message bomb was set off in my head. Indeed, this was a spectacle for the constellations.

[The constellations of absolute good frown at your cruelty.]

[The constellation Secretive Plotter is pressing you with shining eyes.]

"Why did you do that?"

"Because of the habit of the ground rats."

I decided to answer honestly.

"The ground rats have a habit of keeping their catches in the same place as their treasure. It isn't just food. Many things that seem rare are gathered. For example, an item. However, the paths are so complicated that it can't be found unless I follow their path directly."

Lee Gilyoung was silent for a moment. I continued speaking.

"I expected them to take Han Myungoh. I didn't expect him to grab onto Yoo Sangah."

"Then your purpose isn't to save Noona or Ahjussi, it is the items?"

"Yes. Are you disappointed?"

"Nope."

Lee Gilyoung's small hand gripped my finger tightly.

"Hyung shouldn't lie."

“..”

“If Hyung was such a person, you wouldn’t have saved me on the subway. I believe in you.”

Lee Gilyoung didn’t act like a child but he was still a child. Lee Gilyoung didn’t know. To be mature and to be an adult were completely different things.

[Some constellations are touched to tears.]

[200 coins have been sponsored.]

In this world, there were mean adults who would take advantage of such maturity. The hole was longer than I thought and we had to go downwards for quite a long time.

“Hyung.”

“Yes.”

“Hyung, are you a god?”

“...What?”

“Or the main character?”

Children sometimes asked sharp questions. It was because they lived in a world where stories and reality weren’t clearly distinguished. Lee Gilyoung didn’t know exactly what his question meant.

“I’m not a main character. Rather, I always envy the main character.”

“But you still know something about this world?”

I thought for a moment before replying.

“That’s right.”

“Then I’ll ask you one thing.”

“I will answer it if I can.”

“Once we clear all these scenarios... can we make a wish?”

“Wish?”

I was a bit confused.

“Usually there is a reward at the end of these stories. At the end of this story, is there something like that?”

In the darkness, Lee Gilyoung’s breathing was trembling. Lee Gilyoung’s expression when he saw his dead mother suddenly came to mind.

Those who adapted to this world suffered from it in different ways. Some were crazy, some were fanatics and some had irrational optimism.

“Yes, there is.”

I was grateful that this place was dark. It was because Lee Gilyoung couldn’t see my face right now.

“We are almost there Hyung.”

The surrounding black ether was shrinking rapidly. It was evidence that Dark Root was nearby. I tensed up and gripped the thorn.

[A few constellations are holding their breaths.]

I heard the sound of the ground rats somewhere in the ground. As the sound got closer, the sense of space expanded rapidly. I saw a light in the darkness, as if someone had lit a fire.

Then I saw a tattered box beyond that light. The moment I was convinced that I had come to the right place, messages rang in my ears.

[The sub scenario has been updated.]

[You have entered the ‘Ground Rat’s Treasure Trove.’]

---

TL Note: Some of Lee Hyunsung's skill levels are less than the first time his attribute window was checked. Probably an author mistake.

Hyung= Term that males use for a male older than them.

Noona= Term that males use for a female older than them.

Ahjussi= Middle-aged man, uncle, mister, etc.

# Chapter 21

## Shadow Keeper (3)

“Hyung! This...”

Right after Lee Gilyoung discovered the treasure box, I blocked his little mouth.

“Shh, wait.”

The world of Ways of Survival was relentless. The constellations enjoyed the adversity of the characters and added obstacles in the scenarios just to fuck with humans.

Things saying ‘Catch me!’ usually contained traps and even system messages couldn’t be trusted.

“The treasure trove doesn’t just contain treasures.”

[The constellation ‘Abyssal Black Flame Dragon’ is disappointed.]

Abyssal Black Flame Dragon... He had wanted me to die for a while.

Anyway, I waited. Shortly afterwards, shadows started to emerge around the treasure chest.

*Grrr...*

It was the ground rats. They brought something through the tunnel, threw it and exchanged information.

*Hwaruruk.*

Once a certain number of ground rats gathered, the number of lights illuminating the surroundings increased. It was black fire, flames made with black ether.

It was said that this place was the core of Dark Root, which was why it had so much black ether to burn. At that time, someone’s voice was heard.

“It is all because of Yoo Sangah-ssi!”

There was no need to say who he was. It was a voice I would know at once. I gripped the shoulder of the surprised Lee Gilyoung tightly. It wasn't time yet.

“Because of me, what do you mean by that?”

In the dim light, there were two people captured by the ground rats. They were tied up tightly by branches that came up from the ground.

“I-If Yoo Sangah hadn't taken the subway, the situation wouldn't be like this!”

“Why does the subway matter now?”

How could she accept all this nonsense? Maybe Yoo Sangah was a saintly person. Or maybe the sponsor behind her was a saintly person.

“T-That... That, Yoo Sangah-ssi, you ride a bicycle all the time...”

Han Myungoh's voice shook as he wrote gibberish.

Yoo Sangah's tone was cold. “Wait a minute. Were you the one who stole my bike?”

“W-What is this person? I clearly told you that I would drive you in my car! You should know how to accept favours!”

“Answer me. Did you steal my bike?”

All of a sudden, the situation made sense. This was it. It was why a person who drove a Mercedes-Benz S class took the subway line 3.

Well, it wasn't strange. There were quite a few men who had their eyes on Yoo Sangah, not just at the company but at Gumho Station as well.

In fact, Yoo Sangah was a worthy person. Her atmosphere was warm and she knew how to flatter people.

[The constellation Demon-like Judge of Fire hates the character 'Han Myungoh.']

Han Myungoh's face was so red that it could clearly be seen in the dim lighting. It

looked dangerous.

“Yes, shit! I did it! So what?”

“Why are you talking like it isn’t a big deal? You took someone else’s things, it is theft.”

“Theft? Shit, don’t talk bullshit! You should’ve just got on my car from the beginning!”

[The constellation ‘Prisoner of the Golden Headband’ hates this trivial argument.]

I didn’t mean to do this but there was no other way now. I quietly gripped the thorn.

“I didn’t ask you just one thing. I continuously asked to take you home but you kept fucking rejecting me...”

I threw the thorn as hard as I could. The thorn scratched the corner of Han Myungoh’s mouth and continued into the darkness.

“Uwaaaaack! What?”

[The constellation ‘Prisoner of the Golden Headband’ is pleased.]

[100 coins have been sponsored.]

“Dokja-ssi!”

Yoo Sangah called out to me. But I wasn’t looking at them.

*Kuoooooh...*

Across the habitat of the ground rats, the darkness was split apart by the thorn. Then that damned guy came. There was no way it wouldn’t be in Dark Root.

[‘Dark Keeper’ could appear!]

[The sub scenario has been updated!]

[Sub scenario ‘Kill the Guard’ has begun!]

Like slaves surrendering to a king, the terrified ground rats fell to the ground. A dark figure appeared in the dim light. A tentacled monster reminiscent of a god of death.

Lee Gilyoung’s complexion deteriorated sharply.

“Oof, Hyung, that...”

“It is okay.”

Eventually, Lee Gilyoung fell to the ground and started retching. It wasn't strange.

A lot of pressure was felt just looking at it from afar. The cockroaches crawling around long had their stomachs exploded. Lee Gilyoung, who was connected to the cockroaches, would've suffered considerable mental damage.

“Gilyoung. How many more times can you use Diverse Communication?”

“...I think I can do it one or two more times.”

“I understand. Then rest here for a while.”

I left Gilyoung leaning against the side and approached Yoo Sangah and Han Myungoh. The panicked Han Myungoh was struggling.

“O-Ohuk! What is this...?”

I took the Swiss knife and cut the branches binding the two of them. I only moved the knife a few times. Then the part of the branch that it touched abruptly corroded and the blade melted away. Yes, this was the power of a demonic species.

“Stay back.”

I said while raising a weapon made of the spine of a ground rat.

The grade 7 demon type species, Dark Keeper. Among the many monsters that appeared since the start of the destruction, the demon species were toxic.

In fact, the treasures of the ground rats were close to 'tributes' to the demon. Even if it was the same grade, the demon species were different from other monster species.

[The dark keeper has received the favour of the demon king it follows.]

“Kamyun. Der. Yitur.”

The demon species had their own language, worshipped different demon kings and

inherited some of the power of the demon king through Dark Root.

[The Dark Keeper has emitted 'Fear']

[The exclusive skill Fourth Wall has neutralized most of the 'Fear' effect.]

Therefore, killing one demon meant becoming the adversary of their demon king.

“Yitur!”

I didn't know what it was saying but the situation didn't look good. I didn't want to fight if possible.

“M-Mother?”

Yoo Sangah. She still hadn't left?

“I told you to stay back.”

“That monster just said 'Mother'...”

I thought for a moment about what this meant. No, wait a minute.

“Uhh, I think... K-Karud, yemiren? Ah, this is the pronunciation? Aketu?”

For a moment, I thought I was mistaken. But I didn't hear wrong.

“Kallitu!”

Surprisingly, the dark keeper nodded at the end.

[The character 'Yoo Sangah' has activated the 'Interpreter Lv. 3 skill.]

...Oh my god, she wasn't only good at Spanish. Let's see what would happen.

“What is he saying?”

“That... it keeps saying 'become Mother'...”

...Become mother? The dark keeper cried out again and pointed to Yoo Sangah.

“Kallitu!”

Yoo Sangah had a tearful face.

“Uh, Mother? I’m not married yet!”

The dark keeper pointed at Han Myungoh this time.

“Kallitu!”

Han Myungoh turned pale as he wiped his mouth.

“W-Why am I the mother? Father!”

The dark keeper’s tentacles rose.

*Pushu!*

“Oooooof!”

One of the tentacles entered his mouth and Han Myungoh turned black. There was the sound of something moving down Han Myungoh’s throat.

That’s right. This was what it meant to become the mother. I belatedly recalled that the demon species conceived their young in the body of other species.

“Yoo Sangah-ssi, you don’t plan to have a child yet, right?”

“Of course!”

Yoo Sangah immediately understood the words and stepped back quickly. I swung the ground rat spear and tore at the tentacles attached to Han Myungoh.

The dark keeper roared angrily.

“Kallituo!”

*Fushu! Teong!*

The tentacles of the demon species were gradually breaking the ground rat spear. Even

the stone hog thorn, which broke through the stomach of an ichthyosaur, would've been destroyed the moment it was stuck in a demon's body.

Before I knew it, Han Myungoh was far away while Yoo Sangah looked at me.

"Is there a chance?"

Her eyes seemed to be asking me. To tell the truth, I didn't have a chance.

*Pushu! Pushuu! Teong!*

After a few strikes, the ground rat spear was almost destroyed. The hand holding the spear was in pain.

The monster guarding the treasure chest couldn't be caught, just like the ichthyosaur of Dongho Bridge. That's why the original plan wasn't to deal with this monster but to obtain the treasure chest after it disappeared.

But as always, plans existed for things to go wrong.

"Dokkaebi. Are you watching?"

[U-Uh. You knew?]

The dokkaebi showed up in the darkness. I didn't know his name but he seemed to be a cousin of Bihyung.

"There should be some mail for me by now. I want you to hand it over quickly."

[Hihit. It isn't my responsibility. I-It is Bihyung's thing.]

"Right now, you are taking Bihyung's place. Don't you see the constellations complaining?"

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband wants to scold the dokkaebi 'Biryu'.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' threatens the dokkaebi 'Biryu'.]

The dokkaebi Biryu gulped.

[...O-Okay. Instead, it is just this once. I think it will be interesting!]

The dokkaebi muttered something and the summoning began.

[The item has arrived from the exchange.]

[The item 'Broken Faith' has been acquired.]

[The brokerage fee was exempted due to the effect of the contract.]

Broken Faith. The item bartered for the 'ichthyosaur core', which was registered on the Dokkaebi Bag' exchange, had finally arrived.

"Kik."

The dark keeper saw the item coming out of thin air and laughed. No wonder it was laughing. All I received was a D grade item. It was a knife broken in half.

[The item is too old to use. The durability will be poor and it will be difficult to achieve any performance.]

Even the dokkaebi who gave him the item was giggling.

[H-How can you fight with that old thing? And it can't be used if you don't have a special skill...]

I knew that much. I wouldn't have bought it if I didn't know.

"Sigh..."

I sucked in a breath and concentrated my mind.

*Kiiing!*

The hilt started trembling greatly. Biryu shouted with shock.

[Uh? How?]

It was natural to be surprised. It was because this was a skill I bought from his friend for a huge 10,000 coins. Blue ether started to settle slowly on the surface of the broken blade.

[White Pure Star Energy]

After killing the ichthyosaur, I bought this skill from Bihyung. There were a few flaws compared to other superior energy techniques, but they weren't something that could be obtained for the time being.

[Broken Faith has responded to your star energy!]

[Blade of Faith is activated!]

Shortly afterwards, a brilliant white virtual blade sprang up from the edge of the broken blade.

Broken Faith. Its real performance was revealed when star energy was injected into it.

*Pushuuk!*

The number of tentacles increased by dozens and covered my field of view. I wouldn't be safe from these attacks with my current stamina level. It was scary. But now there was a chance.

*Kiiing!*

It was because the Blade of Faith was the best quality weapon when it came to demon species.

*Pachuchuchuchut!*

The tentacles touched by the blade were oxidized and cut off. The dark keeper let out a terrible scream as its tentacles were destroyed. I felt magic power draining out but I wasn't in a hurry.

*Sukakak!*

I calmly moved the blade.

I missed the tentacles many times because he didn't have the 'Fighting Senses' skill and I didn't have the Swordsmanship Training skill, so the way I wielded the blade was terrible. It was natural. I was a reader, not a swordsman.

And a reader fought in the manner of a reader.

[The attribute effect has improved your memories of the pages already read.]

The pages of Ways of Destruction flashed in my head.

“...The dark keeper’s attack pattern is simple. Unconditionally, the tentacle on the upper right will first...”

“...After the attack, a single tentacle at the bottom...”

“...Its tentacles regenerate but it will take a few minutes...”

I read diligently and used what I had read.

“Kuaaah!”

The dark keeper shrieked as its tentacles were cut.

On the other side of my field of view was Lee Gilyoung. The young boy looked at me with awed eyes. Unfortunately, unlike his wishes, I wasn’t the main character in this world. But I was confident of at least one thing.

“Kar. Mien. Der.”

The dark keeper muttered as it barely managed to pull itself together from its shock. I didn’t ask but Yoo Sangah muttered from behind me in a quivering voice.

“How do you know all my weaknesses...?”

This was what it meant. I gave an answer in a light manner.

“I usually read a lot of books.”

I knew more about this world than anyone else.

# Chapter 22

## Shadow Keeper (4)

Maybe we would've fought for a long time.

[The exclusive skill 'Bookmark' can now be activated.]

[The number two bookmark has been activated.]

[The level of the Bookmark skill is low, shortening the activation time.]

[Activation Time: One minute.]

Well, I had this. Otherwise my bones might be torn off my bones or my blood might clot.

[Your understanding of the character is low, so only a part of the character's skill is activated.]

[Weapons Training Lv.1 has been activated.]

But it didn't. To be exact, I couldn't afford it. I used all the powers I had. I squeezed out all my strength and ran through the tentacles.

*Sukak!*

The landscape around me flashed by. The only thing left was the afterimage of a sharp white light and the sense of cutting something.

[Your understanding of the character 'Lee Hyunsung' has increased.]

[The number two bookmark has been disabled.]

I felt like I had lost strength. I had poured everything out in one blow. Then after a while. I heard a trembling voice in the air.

[...C-Constellations. Did you all see it? I-I didn't see wrong...?]

It was the appearance of Dokkaebi Biryu, who had forgotten his duties. In fact, it wasn't strange to be surprised.

[A few constellations are doubting their eyes.]

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is flaring fiercely.]

It was a powerful grade 7 demon lying down with damaged tentacles in front of me.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' pulls his hair as if he is pleased.]

[500 coins have been sponsored.]

The severed tentacles lay on the ground and the surrounding ground rats had long been killed or fled in the aftermath of the fight. Only the dark keeper lay breathing roughly on the ground, its lips twitching.

"...Ki. Kii. Ki."

Originally, the grade 7 demon was an enemy that I couldn't cope with. Thus, I was prepared. I wasn't as strong as Yoo Jonghyuk and I didn't have a good sponsor like Lee Hyunsung.

[The obsessive-compulsive constellations praise your readiness.]

[200 coins have been sponsored.]

It was just that the 'information' I had was more advantageous than others. But sometimes, 'information' was more powerful than anything in the world.

*Kiiing!*

The very result of that information was the white light sword now in my hand.

[A-An 'ether blade' in the beginning scenarios... C-Constellations. Is this a true story?]

Fortunately, I didn't have to explain it as the dokkaebi was in full swing.

Ether Blade. It was the flagship technique of the incarnations supported by the highest level sponsor. The technique was often called 'energy blade' in Murim novels.

"To be exact, it isn't a real ether blade. The real one is much stronger than this."

[T-That's right! Strictly speaking, it is Broken Faith that has absorbed the White Pure Star Energy and made the blade...]

Looking at the dokkaebi, he wasn't a complete idiot.

[Amazing... There is this guy in that brat Bihyung's channel...]

As if waiting for this, the Blade of Faith turned off.

[Broken Faith's durability has run out. This item is no longer available.]

It was a pity but it did its part.

"Give me the compensation for finishing the sub scenario."

[Uhh, that's right. W-Wait!]

Biryu hurriedly entered something in the air and a message soon popped up.

[You have met the conditions to clear the sub scenario!]

[You have earned 500 coins.]

[A handful of constellations admire your scenario.]

The reward was smaller than I thought. It was natural. It was because I haven't killed the dark keeper.

[By the way, are you not going to kill that guy?]

Biryu looked at me with expectant eyes.

I let out an exhausted breath and glanced at the dark keeper on the ground. Then I kindly said.

"I have a non-killing ideology."

[N-Non-killing...?]

"I'm not someone who kills easily."

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' admires it!]

[100 coins have been sponsored.]

Of course, it was a lie.

[The constellation Secretive Plotter is smiling slyly at you.]

[100 coins have been sponsored.]

The bewildered Biryu stammered.

[B-But won't the reward be great if you kill this guy? You will be the first to kill a grade 7 demon and I will give you 7,000 coins! Do you know how big 7,000 coins is?]

"I won't kill it. I need to open the compensation box so please step aside."

I removed the irritating Biryu from in front of me. The dark keeper wasn't the real reason I came here. So...

*Puok!*

[The grade 7 demon, 'Dark Keeper' was killed.]

...What?

The dokkaebi who looked like it was so funny he would die and the dark keeper who died with a knife in his chest. Then.

"Haha, hahahahat! N-Now I can be strong! Kim Dokja, you son of a bitch! You didn't know this!"

Han Myungoh was the one holding the knife. I had a rough idea of what happened. Then explosive messages were heard in my ears.

[A grade 7 demon has been hunted for the first time!]

[An impossible feat has been accomplished.]

[You have earned 8,000 coins.]

[Contribution: Kim Dokja, Han Myungoh]

Perhaps these messages were also shared with Han Myungoh. I only received a few coins because I didn't deal the finishing blow but...

I could see Han Myungoh dying with happiness at the messages.

"Non-killing ideology? Stupid guy! What is killing in this burning world? There can't be a person like you! You know—"

Then Han Myungoh stopped. Now he knew what he had done.

[The grade 7 demon 'dark keeper' has been killed and the demon king 'Asmodeus' has noticed the murderer's presence.

[The demon king Asmodeus will chase the one who dealt the finishing blow until they are dead.]

[The demon king Asmodeus has put a terrible curse on the person who dealt the final blow!]

[Final Blow: Han Myungoh]

"W-What? What is this message?"

Han Myungoh cried out fearfully.

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' admires your wickedness.]

"Ah... didn't I tell you? I intentionally didn't kill it."

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' has recommended your scenario to Star Stream.]

Han Myungoh stared into the air like he had lost his soul.

The curse of the demon king 'Asmodeus' was the most terrible thing for a killer. I didn't know what it was but it was surely terrible.

I looked back and saw Lee Gilyoung and Yoo Sangah looking this way with bemused expressions. I smiled as if nothing had happened.

"We'll open the rewards together."



After a while, we searched through the treasures and pulled out one each.

"I got this."

"I have this..."

Yoo Sangah and Lee Gilyoung found a small bracelet and old shield respectively.

[Magic Power Recovery Bracelet]  
[Old Iron Shield]

They were both D grade items but it was better than nothing. The Magic Power Recovery Bracelet was a useful item for everyone and the Old Iron Shield would be good for Lee Hyunsung.

It was difficult to ignore the 'iron' in the name. This iron was much harder than Earth's iron.

Yoo Sangah spoke with slight disappointment.

"It is less than I thought."

Less. Her words weren't wrong. It was too shameful to call this a 'treasure trove.'

Yoo Jonghyuk.

The guy who left yesterday had probably gone through this place. He knew he would be tired fighting the demon so he took a chance and stole the treasure.

In the end, we were robbing a place that was already robbed.

"It is okay because the main thing is still left."

I looked at a black box in the centre of the warehouse. We didn't waste any more time and opened the box.

The thing in the box was a stove. It was small enough to fit into a pocket and it was shameful to call it a stove.

[Magic Power Stove].

As expected, it was still here. This item was in fact the key item in this sub scenario.

[Magic Power Stove can only be used once per person.]

Obviously, Yoo Jonghyuk had taken one so there were two Magic Power Stoves in total.

"...What is that thing?"

“Well, I think I know a bit about its purpose.”

I purposely trembled, activated the stove with magic power and raised a dead ground rat's leg.

It was funny since it didn't fit the size of a plate of food, but in five seconds, a remarkable change happened to the leg of the ground rat.

“Wow! A delicious smell!”

There was a sweet smell and the leg of the ground rat changed to a golden colour.

“Meat!”

Lee Gilyoung cried out excitedly. Yoo Sangah asked urgently.

“C-Can we eat this?”

“I'll try it first.”

I grabbed the greasy hind leg and dug into the flesh. The juices ran from the flesh... I forgot to chew and closed my eyes. Tasting it was different from reading it in the book.

[A few constellations are drooling.]

[The constellations have sponsored you 100 coins.]

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' has swallowed his saliva.]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is biting his nails.]

.....

The messages continuously popped up. Indeed, eating broadcasts were the best. Everyone was united in front of food.

“Eat it. I think it is okay.”

The two people rushed towards the meat as soon as I spoke. They hadn't had a proper meal for three days so they would be quite hungry. Han Myungoh recovered and came over hesitantly.

“D-Dokja-ssi... I-I went crazy for a second...”

“Eat. Don’t worry about the other thing.”

“T-Thank you!”

“You will become a ghost after eating.”

“W-What...?”

Han Myungoh’s complexion turned as white as death. I said it like a joke but Han Myungoh really would die. Asmodeus’ pursuit was hard for even Yoo Jonghyuk to overcome.

We each took one leg and started to eat. We were eating meat together because we were hungry after everything that started. Humans couldn’t help it.

Everyone ate the meal in silence. Was it due to the light spreading gently from the Magic Power Stove? I was feeling a bit sentimental.

Killing something and eating it in order to live. This was the life of a human. It had been like this so far but I wondered why it felt so fresh.

Suddenly, I looked up and met Yoo Sangah’s eyes. Ha, Yoo Sangah came to her senses and suddenly cried out.

“I’m pathetic.”

“...Huh?”

“Dokja-ssi worked so hard and I am just eating like a pig... I was no help at all...”

“No, Yoo Sangah-ssi. That...”

“But how does Dokja-ssi know all this? You know how to cook a beast and...”

“Ah, that...”

“Indeed! It must be because you read fantasy novels, right? Really, I didn’t know the world was going to be like this. My silly self was just memorizing Spanish.”

I felt somewhat strange when I heard Yoo Sangah say this. I opened my mouth to

comfort her.

“It is because Yoo Sangah-ssi studied foreign languages that you learned the language of the demon species.”

Of course, it wasn't very helpful.

“I see... Thank you, Dokja-ssi...”

I smiled at Yoo Sangah and got up from where I was sitting. The party was immersed in eating again. I took a break and headed for the back of the party.

In fact, the Magic Power Stove was important but my real purpose was a separate item. I looked closely at the ‘black box’ that contained the Magic Power Stove. It was this. There was no doubt about it.

Yoo Jonghyuk, who took the Magic Power Stove, probably didn't know about it. The real treasure of the warehouse was this ‘black box.’

In the original story, Yoo Jonghyuk only knew about this after the 6th round of regression.

Who was the first to discover this. Was it ‘Heavenly Maid Hori?’ Well, it was hard to remember. It wasn't accurate but it was probably something like this:

“Over there. There are strange boxes in the early areas. If you put something in there...”

At this time, I met Yoo Sangah's eyes.

“What is the box for?”

“Huh? Ah, this...”

Yoo Sangah said as she looked at the box. There were unknown characters written on the box.

...Could she read them?

“Random... item box?”

Damn. This was why foreign language proficiency was important.

“Uh... that... um. So that is what it means.”

I was a bit embarrassed. Yoo Sangah cried out.

“Quickly use it, Dojka-ssi!”

“...Is it okay?”

*Nod nod.* Lee Gilyoung nodded vigorously.

“You don’t need to worry about us. All the items obtained here are yours. That is obvious.”

Yes, I was caught so let’s do it quickly.

“Then I will use it well.”

[A few constellations are nodding at your decision.]

I took the nucleus of the grade 7 demon from my pocket. I had cut it from the dead body of the dark keeper. In addition, I took out Broken Faith which had run out of durability. According to the original plot, the use of this box was simple.

“Who knew? There would be a limited edition coin item.”

I placed the demon core and Broken Faith into the box.

“Ha, you can’t believe me words? Is it real? Put sub items in there and close the box!”

In fact, I didn’t know what would happen when I put in these two items. But I was certain that something huge would come out.

“A top item will unconditionally come out!”

A moment later, a dazzling light burst out from the closed box.

# Chapter 23

## Judgment Time (1)

The limited random items box.

According to the setting of Ways of Survival, this was a coin item that was sold as a limited edition in a past 'scenario.'

[Ah, no, why is this thing here?]

The alarmed Biryu shouted belatedly.

[I-I-It was banned immediately after release!]

According to the original Ways of Survival, the setting of this item was quite complicated.

This coin item was released long before the 8612 Planetary scenarios began. It was a product that was forced to be banned by the Star Stream Administration Bureau.

If sub items were put it, it would 'unconditionally' spit out a top item. This would have a tremendous impact on the balance of the scenarios. In addition, the price of one item box was a huge one million coins.

The constellations were angry at this ridiculous billing policy and the stupid dokkaebi who invented this item was fired from the Administration Bureau.

[C-Constellations. It is like this... I don't know why it is here... H-Hihihit! Broadcast end!]

[#BI-7623 channel has temporarily closed.]

The delirious sounding Biryu closed the channel and the voices of the constellations disappeared. I regretted not being able to see the reactions of the constellations but it couldn't be helped.

*Dudududu.*

I looked down at the vibrating box. The random draw was about to start in earnest.

[A sword type item will be awarded for putting in the same type of items!]

[The random draw has started!]

The limited edition random item box randomly spat out items of a higher rank related to the item you put in. There was a chance for anything from a C grade to a SSS grade item to come out. In the end, it was all up to chance.

[The offered items are related to a certain constellation!]

[The probability that an item associated with this constellation will appear is greatly increased.]

...Eh?

It was an unexpected message. But it didn't seem to be a disadvantage for me. Both my hands were sweating. I hadn't been so nervous when I bought a random chance item in an online game. Please let it be an A rating.

[A top rated item has appeared!]

[The number of available random item boxes is 0.]

The box soon stopped trembling and the faint light subsided. I looked around at Yoo Sangah and Lee Gilyoung, whose eyes were shining.

"Shall we open it?"

"Yes!"

We opened the box.

"W-Wow!"

Lee Gilyoung was so surprised that he screamed. By the way, it really was amazing. A luxurious silver guard and a white blade... the shape was somewhat similar to Broken Faith?

I immediately checked the item information.

+

[Item Information]

Name: Unbroken Faith

Rating: Star Relic

Description: In the past, it was the sword of the hero 'Kaizenix', who led the Grusiad during the Great Demon Age. The great ether dominance of Kaizenix allowed him to create a 'Blade of Faith' that contained fire, darkness and divine power respectively. As an additional option, it increases strength and stamina level by 2.

+

I was speechless. No... was this real? It wasn't a simple alphabet rating but a star relic item?

"D-Dokja-ssi! Doesn't it look like a huge item?"

It really was a huge item.

In the world of Ways of Survival, the 'star relics' were the only items excluded from the ratings table. It wasn't just because they had a strong performance but because these items were special.

Every star relic contained the power of a living constellation.

The difference in performance varied depending on whether the constellation was the hero of a certain world and how much awareness they had. However, they contained the power of a constellation so the relics had tremendous value.

In addition, it raised the level of his strength and stamina by 2. When taking into account that A grade items increased the total stats value by 1, it must be at least a S grade item.

Yoo Jonghyuk hadn't obtained an item like this yet.

I looked around at Yoo Sangah and Lee Gilyoung.

"...I can really have it?"

"Of course. It naturally belongs to Dokja-ssi."

Yoo Sangah responded in advance to his repeat question. Lee Gilyoung also nodded

eagerly.

I looked at Han Myungoh but he was just eating the leg of a ground rat with a stupid expression. He was muttering unknown things to himself. I thought he would insist on having the item... it was strange.

[You have acquired a star relic.]

[The owner of the star relic is curious about you.]

The message showed that the constellation existed somewhere. Later, I would open up Ways of Destruction and look for it.

“Then we should go back. There are plenty of ground rats out there so we can go back with just the Magic Power Stove.”

“But how do we get back?”

“It won’t be a problem to leave with Gilyoung’s power. Use Diverse Communication and...”

However, Lee Gilyoung’s expression wasn’t bright.

“Hyung, I...”

“Huh?”

“There aren’t any insects nearby.”

Come to think of it, the insects around here had burst from the pressure when I was fighting the dark keeper. It was a problem I hadn’t thought about.

“There really isn’t one? Some of them should still be alive. If we move for a bit and use the ability...”

There were so many insects in the world that I didn’t have any sympathy for the few who died. But Lee Gilyoung still had a dark expression.

“Well, there is one I can actually call...” Lee Gilyoung closed his eyes and started concentrating.

“Dokja-ssi, isn’t this a big strange?”

Lee Gilyoung’s eyes were gradually losing focus. Then blood flowed down from his nose.

“Gilyoung?”

All of a sudden, there was a loud vibration from above them. Dust started falling down. The vibration was coming from above ground...

At this moment, goosebumps appeared on my skin.

*Kuuong!*

“Gilyoung! Lee Gilyoung! Wake up!”

“Ye... Hyung?”

Lee Gilyoung’s eyes returned to normal.

“Gilyoung, stop the skill! Quickly!”

The surprised Lee Gilyoung stopped the skill and the vibration subsided. I sighed with relief.

There were incredibly dangerous monsters running around above ground. There were numerous high rated monsters, including the grade 7 rhinoceros. Among these monsters was the insect king. It was obvious a type of insect just based on the name.

“You really...”

I placed my hand on Lee Gilyoung’s head and didn’t say anything. He was about to call an insect king from aboveground... was he Fabre? We almost got buried here.

“For the time being, seal this skill. Don’t use it unless I tell you to. Understood?”

“Yes...”

Lee Gilyoung replied in a sad manner. Now there was no choice but to wait.

“We will get lost in the darkness. Let’s wait a bit longer and move when small insects appear in the vicinity.”

It was easy to enter but the Edge of Darkness was a very dangerous place. It was a place where someone could disappear for a day or two if a little mistake was made.

Then Yoo Sangah raised her hand.

“If it is just going back, I think I can fill in for Gilyoung.”

“...How?”

I was going to ask if she would converse with the Edge of Darkness but stopped because it seemed sarcastic. Yoo Sangah replied in a slightly uncertain tone.

“I have a similar skill.”

When I thought about it, I still didn’t know Yoo Sangah’s attribute and sponsor.

“What is the skill?”

“That, it is a complicated skill to untangle...”

Untangle?

“...Excuse me, can I ask what Yoo Sangah-ssi’s attribute is?”

Yoo Sangah wasn’t a character in the novel so I didn’t know her attribute. It was like Lee Gilyoung and Han Myungoh.

“Uh, that...”

Yoo Sangah made a difficult expression. It wouldn’t have been so frustrating if I could use Character List on Yoo Sangah. I tried to use Character List once again as a test.

[The exclusive skill, Character List is activated.]

[This person isn’t registered in ‘Character List.’]

Indeed... But there was one more message.

[Currently collecting information about the corresponding figure.]

...Eh?

It was a message that never existed before. Come to think of it, I heard a system message when Yoo Sangah used the 'Interpreter' skill. It wasn't something that was originally heard.

Was it possible for the Character List to be updated after some time? Perhaps...

I organized my thoughts and decided to let Yoo Sangah go.

"Forget that I asked. By the way, nice work. In the future, don't let other people know about your personal attribute."

"That's not it! I trust Dojka-ssi...!"

Well, Yoo Sangah's appearance said otherwise. At the moment, I got an idea.

"Can Yoo Sangah tell me about the nature of your sponsor?"

Yoo Sangah bowed her head.

"I'm sorry."

The words barely escaped from her trembling lips. Based on this level, it was possible that she made some type of promise in the contract with her sponsor. Perhaps there was a life constraint in respect with the spilling of information.

I didn't know what sponsor they were but it seemed they had decided to raise Yoo Sangah in earnest.

"It is okay. I understand."

"Thank you, really..."

There was no need to thank me. She couldn't tell me her sponsor... it made my heart tense. It was the desire of a reader who wanted to fill the space between empty lines.

"Then try using your skill."

Soon, a faintly shining thread emerged from Yoo Sangah's fingertips and started to stretch out.

"In fact, I tied up a 'thread' when I got kidnapped."

One branch of the thread was connected to me and the other one was connected outside. Maybe it was bound to Lee Hyunsung or Jung Heewon.

"Let's go."

There was no reason for Yoo Sangah to have such a skill from the beginning. This was definitely the stigma provided by her sponsor.

By the way, it was a 'thread' to escape the labyrinth. This... somehow, I thought it was a constellation I knew.

[#BI-7623 channel is open.]

I started hearing messages from the constellations again.

[A number of constellations have put a claim on the channel's transmission system!]  
[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is curious about what came out of the random item box.]

Ah, they haven't seen it? What a pity.

[Damn! That bastard messed with my channel... hahahat! Did you stay well while I was away?]

And the nice... no, a familiar voice was heard. Bihyung.

◇ ◇ ◇

[...You did such great things while I was gone?]

'Was it because of me that you couldn't come back?'

[It... yes, it isn't unrelated. I got a warning from the Administration Bureau because the advertisement went on for too long.]

Now Bihyung's voice was only audible to me. It was the 'dokkaebi communication' that only the dokkaebi could use. Of course, it was an obvious violation of the rules to allow me to use it.

[I have decided not to care about small things now. And I can go back and forth to the Administration Bureau. Rather... how do you know about the 'Random Box'?]

'Just, I found it by chance.'

[Dammit. There are still remnants of the black history left. Why is that box there...]

'Black history?'

[.....]

'...Wait. Surely that absurd coin item wasn't planned by you?'

As a reader of Ways of Survival, I didn't know this.

[Damn! If I wasn't greedy at that time...]

"Wow, it really is delicious. What a surprise."

Bihyung's grumbling was cut off by Jung Heewon's cry of admiration.

10 minutes ago, we safely encountered the rest of the party thanks to Yoo Sangah's guidance. Fortunately, Jung Heewon and Lee Hyunsung kept the boundary until we came back.

"You will recover a bit after eating."

"Well, I really think that my better is getting better."

Jung Heewon seemed much better as she swung her shoulders in a test. The meat of the underground species actually contained detoxification components.

"Did you get a lot of things in there? In addition to the Magic Power Stove..."

"I got a few things."

I looked at Lee Hyunsung and said.

Lee Hyunsung put on and removed the Old Steel Shield that he received from me several times. Now he was polishing the surface again and again. It was like someone with a new car.

[The character 'Lee Hyunsung' feels a faint loyalty to you.]

Jung Heewon seemed envious of the scene and asked.

"Is there anything I can use?"

"No."

"What is that blade?"

"It is mine."

"...Will you distribute the meat to the people?"

"If they have coins."

"But... you are really stingy. Kim Dokja."

"Let's say that I have a strong sense of survival."

As we were passing around a piece of cooked ground rat, the tunnel ended. The surroundings suddenly brightened and people started to be seen. But the atmosphere was weird. What was this urgent and bustling mood?

[There are 20 minutes left until the paid settlement.]

[Prepare the survival fee.]

I belatedly noticed the time. That's right. It was already that time. It was amazing that the word 'paid' sounded so scary.

"Coin, coins please!"

"I don't have enough coins! Please, a few coins..."

100 coins wouldn't be a problem if they faithfully participated in the scenario, but such humans were rare.

"I'll give you one million won, no, ten million won! Who will sell 100 coins?"

The price of the coins was soaring. It was funny. There was a ridiculous premium on money that had no value until the beginning of the destruction.

And there were people smiling as they watched from afar. These guys already had enough coins. It was Cheon Inho and the Cheoldoo Group.

A few women flocked towards the gang members and cried out.

"Y-You said you would give me 100 coins before!"

"Hrmm, is that so? I don't remember."

"What...?"

"I will think again if you will let me put it in one more time. How about it?"

Jung Heewon pulled out her blade and stared at them.

"Those sons of a bitches..."

[The attribute of character 'Jung Heewon' is about to blossom.]

The time had come for Jung Heewon. It wasn't bad if her attribute blossomed now... yet. She needed some patience in order to get the 'attribute' I was thinking about.

Then a system message emerged.

[After a while, the survival settlement will begin.]

"S-Save me! Save me!"

The expressions of the party changed. Lee Hyunsung bowed his head sadly while Jung Heewon bit her lip while holding her blade.

Everyone knew what the price of the 'paid settlement' was. There was no one here

who hadn't experienced it.

"...Dokja-ssi."

Then Yoo Sangah looked at me.

"Yes."

In this world, coins were power. A person with coins could obtain good items or good stats. Coins were everything.

[Several constellations with scenario recommendations have been added to the channel.]

[The constellation Secretive Plotter is watching your choice.]

[The constellation Prisoner of the Golden Headband is watching your choice.]

[The constellation Demon-like Judge of Fire is watching your choice.]

And I was current the person with the highest number of coins in the station.

# Chapter 24

## Judgment Time (2)

Just as I was about to open my mouth, I heard Cheon Inho's voice.

"Oh, Dokja-ssi! You came just in time."

Cheon Inho smiled as he found us. I had a foreboding feeling as Cheon Inho spoke in a loud voice.

"Dokja-ssi has a lot of coins! How much? You are probably the richest one among us, right?"

[The character 'Cheon Inho' has activated the 'Incite Lv. 2' skill.]

The crowd looked my way.

"C-Coins?"

"Who has a lot of coins?"

It didn't take long for all eyes to turn to me. Cheon Inho, he was a really great guy.

"Y-You are Dokja-ssi?"

"Please save me!"

People panted as they approached. The number of people flocking was estimated to be at least 20. If I gave all these people coins, I would lose 2,000 coins. But if I didn't give them coins, I would become a big villain of Gumho Station.

[Your understanding of the character 'Cheon Inho' has increased.]

"Haha, Dokja-ssi. I don't have the coins to help all these poor people but... isn't Dokja-ssi different? Will you just wait and watch?"

I sighed quietly. I had seen this trick one or twice.

[The constellations of the Absolute Good system have defined Cheon Inho as ‘wicked’.]

I had enough of putting up with him.

“S-Save me!”

“Please save me!”

People burst into tears with the most pitiful expression in the world.

[Hahahat! This story is becoming fun. For reference, there are 10 minutes left!]

Bihyung spoke in a voice that was full of joy and the party looked at me with strange expressions. I let out a short sigh and slowly closed my eyes before opening them again.

“I see. You want coins?”

Then I laughed.

“Why should I?”

I looked around at the people. The first scenario was original sin. Thus, none of the people here were innocent.

That made it more disgusting. Those who trampled on someone else to survive, who couldn’t even bear responsibility for their own life.

“W-Why?”

“You have a lot of coins! Can’t you give us a few?”

In the midst of the confusion, Cheon Inho burst out laughing.

“I expected this from Dokja-ssi.”

“...”

“From the very first moment Dokja-ssi showed up here. Didn’t you sell food for coins? If you didn’t make them buy food at that time, do you know how many people can survive now?”

“Yes! He is right!”

“Shit! Give me back my coins!”

Suddenly the atmosphere was flowing against me. Maybe this was what Cheon Inho wanted.

“Just a minute everyone! Your actions right now...!”

“Dokja-ssi isn’t such a person!”

Yoo Sangah and Lee Hyunsung tried to diffuse the crowd but they had already lost their sense of reason. Then Cheon Inho drove in the last wedge.

“Dokja-ssi. I will give you one last chance. Give the coins back to the people.”

“What if I don’t want to?”

“Then the worst will happen.”

The crowd of 20 people started to approach step by step.

“T-This... come! Give me your coins!”

Nevertheless, no one attacked first. Eventually, a member of the Cheoldoo Group came forward.

“You scum! What are you doing? Kill him! Why are you hesitating when you can snatch the coins after killing him?”

The man who shouted had a very sturdy physique. I triggered Character List and confirmed his information.

+

[Character Summary]

Name: Han Minsung

Private Attribute: Bully (General)

Overall Stats: Stamina Lv. 8, Strength Lv. 8, Agility Lv. 8, Magic Power Lv. 2.

+

He was the owner of abilities that fit a 'bully.' He wasn't originally at this level... this guy did 'it.' Yes, he acted rashly because he believed in his stats.

"Kill that bastard!"

The metal pipe in his hand moved. A steel pipe containing a Lv. 8 strength. The former 'Kim Dokja' might be scared by this threat but... For the current me, it was just ridiculous.

*Sukak!*

The man's arm was cut off and rolled across the ground with the iron pipe.

"Kuaaack!"

The blood covered Unbroken Faith was emitting a white light. I swept a glance over the quiet people.

"U-Uh..."

Everyone turned pale when they saw a Cheoldoo Group member being overwhelmed with one blow. Now that I had shown off a bit, it was time to start.

"Pathetic... do you really believe this situation is because of me?"

I looked left and right at each face in the crowd. On the other side, Cheon Inho was looking confused.

"In fact, you know very well that it isn't me."

Like a sick goldfish, the mouths of the crowd dropped open. I spoke like I was disseminating food to them.

"You guys are doing this because you are scared. In fact, even though you knew what was wrong and are in a crisis, you are trembling in fear because of them."

“Haha, look at this, Dokja-ssi! What are you saying...?”

“It is because they are stronger than you! Their overall stats are higher than you and they have a lot of coins! But everyone, you know what?”

I took a step towards the crowd and asked. The entire crowd retreated like surprised goldfish. However, they were already in my fish tank.

“Why are they stronger than you?”

I took one more step.

“More than anything, why do they have more coins than you? Is it because they are gangsters? Perhaps.”

[The characters around you are shaken.]

Even in fear, there were some emotions that could be conveyed with certainty. Questions passed over their faces.

“C-Cheon Inho-ssi, how many coins do you have...?”

“Haha, don’t you know? Well, I have sold a few and—”

“Do you think it is possible to get that many stats with just that? Really?”

Cheon Inho closed his mouth. I turned from left to right, looking at the crowd’s faces one by one.

“When I came to Gumho Station a few days ago, there were 87 people here.”

“ ... ”

“But how many people are left now? I don’t think there is more than 50 people. Do you know why?”

“T-They went out as scouts and the monsters—”

“Monsters? Do you still believe that?”

“T-Then...”

“You fools. Think about it with your brains. Did those people really die because of the monsters? Then why haven’t any of the Cheoldoo Group bastards died?”

The area became quiet in an instant.

“Why is it that they come back stronger?”

[The constellation ‘Secretive Plotter’ nods at your reasoning.]

“D-Don’t tell me—”

The people turned to look at Cheon Inho. The Cheoldoo Group members hesitated. Now it was my turn to drive in the wedge.

“They said it before. If you kill me, you will get coins.”

[The constellation ‘Prisoner of the Golden Headband’ pulls his hair in excitement.]

“But how do they know that killing a person will give coins?”

“Y-You... Inho-ssi! Don’t tell me?”

“Shut up! I’m being framed!”

As Cheon Inho moved back, the men of the Cheoldoo Group pulled out their weapons. The frightened people were weeping.

[Hahahat! There are 7 minutes left!]

I stepped forward towards the people.

“If you have any last self-respect left, fight with your own hands.”

The Blade of Faith cried out violently. Anger filled the eyes of the people.

“At least get back what was taken from you.”

As I waited, the people of the Cheoldoo Group rushed towards me simultaneously. I

also ran towards them.

“Now this world is such a place.”

The white light moved and people screamed. Then someone shouted.

“Yes, shit!”

“Sons of a bitches!”

The people started to move. All in all, they were people who had already killed.

“M-Mother!”

“Dayoung, come here! Do this! Just like what you did on the subway with Mother!”

Children and mothers.

“This fuckin’ bastards!”

There was a middle-aged Indian man.

“These scum!”

But they weren’t a match.

The number of people left in the Cheoldoo Group was high and their fighting power was overwhelming due to all the coins they obtained through human hunting.

Or this would be the case if it wasn’t for me.

*Sukakak!*

The arms and legs of the Cheoldoo Group members who rushed for me flew off. The eerie sensation of cutting off a person’s limbs filled my hands. The incapacitated Cheoldoo Group members looked up at me.

“S-Spare me...”

At that moment. Someone moved ahead of me and stuck their blade in the fallen

Cheoldoo Group members.

“I said I would kill him.”

[All evolution conditions of the attribute ‘Crouching Figure’ have been met.]

The attribute of character ‘Jung Heewon’ is blossoming.]

A dazzling brilliance was rising from her body. I nodded. It was now time.

[The attribute of ‘Jung Heewon’ has blossomed to ‘Judge of Destruction (Hero).]

A judge to wipe out evil. The best of the three ‘judge’ attributes woke up from a crouching figure.

[You have contributed greatly to the attribute of ‘Crouching Figure!]

[The character ‘Jung Heewon’ won’t hesitate to be your sword in the future.]

“Rest from now on.”

Jung Heewon’s eyes were pale blue as she declared.

“These guys are my share.”

[The character ‘Jung Heewon’ has activated the exclusive skill ‘Judgment Time.’]

[The Absolute Good constellations have agreed to the use of this skill.]

[‘Judgment Time’ has been activated.]

Jung Heewon had a bloody aura around her body as her blade painted an eerie trail. It was a light and precise kendo that moved between the Cheoldoo Group members. Blood spurted everywhere.

“Kuaaaak!”

It was a scene of a complete massacre. Of course, Jung Heewon wasn’t the only one fighting. Yoo Sangah, Lee Hyunsung and even Lee Gilyoung were protecting their respective positions. But no one was as active as Jung Heewon.

Like a person who was born for murder, Jung Heewon killed and killed. If I cut off a man’s arm, Jung Heewon stabbed his heart. If I cut off his leg, Jung Heewon cut his

throat.

Jung Heewon took care of all those I left behind. She moved without hesitation, like a person who had been longing for this moment.

“ ... ”

The area was filled with blood.

The only person left from the Cheoldoo Group was Cheon Inho. However, many parts of his body were injured by the citizens. Jung Heewon looked at me and I nodded. Cheon Inho laughed as he looked at me.

“Hu, huhu... y-you...”

He never stopped speaking. Jung Heewon appeared behind Cheon Inho and cut him from top to bottom.

[All constellations in the channel feel intense joy.]

Finally, everyone stopped moving. The fight was over. However, they couldn't feel it.

The times when they ate grilled meat, felt the meaning of life, joked while walking and enjoyed moments of peace all seemed like a lie.

This damn scenario.

Yoo Sangah was crying. Lee Gilyoung closed his eyes. Lee Hyunsung bit his lips so hard he was bleeding. Jung Heewon exhausted her physical strength and was sitting in a pool of blood.

Yes, this was the truth of the world.

[The survival value will be settled.]

There was the sound of popping all around us. Those who had coins survived. Those who failed to get coins were now dead. And no one was able to save each other.

I said to the people.

“Wake up, everybody.”

Even if I raised my head, the sky couldn't be seen. I stared at the unseen sky for a while, resisting some great fate.

The noisy constellations had no answer this time.

“This scenario has just begun.”

While everyone was in deep thought, I was thinking about the next scenario alone. My mind was calm as pages flipped one after another.

I have obtained everything I needed from Gumho Station. The next stage was Chungmuro.

# Chapter 25

## Judgment Time (3)

The following morning, there were a few changes to Gumho Station.

First of all, Han Myungoh had disappeared.

He had hidden once the fighting started and disappeared after it ended. I didn't know if he was hiding somewhere in the station or was moving to the next station.

"Let's not worry about him now. I didn't like him from the beginning. In addition, he isn't the only one who disappeared."

It was as Jung Heewon said. After the fight yesterday, the number of people remaining in Gumho Station was almost nonexistent.

It wasn't that there were few survivors. Rather, more people survived compared to the original plot. However, most of those who survived left the station last night. Perhaps they had their own reasons.

"...Will the remaining people be okay?"

Yoo Sangah asked as she looked at the survivors.

Me, Yoo Sangah, Lee Hyunsung, Lee Gilyoung and Jung Heewon. Apart from us five, there were only five people left in this station.

Jung Heewon spoke first.

"Hey everyone. Are you coming with us?"

The casual words caused a stir among the people. The representative was a young woman holding a child's hand.

"...We will go separately. We have some coins left."

I honestly admired that the mother and child survived the bloody fight. If she had that much strength, they might be able to survive without going with us.

Jung Heewon nodded.

“Yes. I wish you luck.”

Once Jung Heewon turned around, relief appeared on the people’s faces.

In fact, this response wasn’t strange. Certainly, yesterday’s situation was a bit shocking.

It was understandable. One refused to give out charity while another one brutally killed people, even if there was a reason. To them, Jung Heewon might not be much different from the Cheoldoo Group.

I touched Lee Hyunsung, who was making a stupid expression next to me.

“Lee Hyunsung-ssi?”

“Ah, yes!”

Lee Hyunsung, who was staring at Jung Heewon with a blank expression, looked at me with surprise. I think I knew what he was thinking.

He wondered if she was the woman struck by madness yesterday and killed all the Cheoldoo Group.

“Are the preparations finished?”

“Yep! It is a big rough but it is finished. There are plastic bottles to be used as water containers, goods to protect from the cold and emergency supplies...”

Indeed, a soldier was useful in situations like this.

“...It is up to here. If you need anything else...”

There was nothing else I needed... I wanted to say but I suddenly thought about something.

“Oh, can you find me any portable secondary batteries?”

“You are talking about a battery? Why...?”

It was natural to wonder. A smartphone was useless because no signal was available. I replied roughly.

“I have a place to use it.”

Lee Hyunsung said he would look for it and started to search through the things left behind by the Cheoldoo Group. Lee Gilyoung and Yoo Sangah also said they would help. Jung Heewon looked at me and asked.

“Are we going now?”

“We’re going.”

She asked naturally, as if there was no question that we would go together. This was Jung Heewon. It was welcome from my viewpoint. The ‘Judge of Destruction’ was a talented person who even Yoo Jonghyuk would pay attention to.

“I have many questions.”

“Not now.”

“Ah really, you are an iron wall.”

Jung Heewon lightly punched me and laughed.

[You have received 1,500 coins from the character ‘Jung Heewon.’]

“This...?”

“I am dividing it. I feel too sorry to eat it all alone. I will give it to other people.”

I understood what she was saying. Yesterday, Jung Heewon alone killed most of the Cheoldoo Group members. In other words, she obtained most of their coins. By the way... I was a bit nervous about this.

“You don’t need to do this.”

Jung Heewon didn't know. In fact, I had a lot more coins.

"I'm not Dokja-ssi, you know?"

She punched my arms a few more times before walking towards the tunnel with her backpack.

"Finish this off. I'll go ahead and make some arrangements."

"Don't go too far ahead. There are dangerous sections to go alone."

Jung Heewon waved her hands as if not to worry while wandering away.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' likes your comradeship.]

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' smiles slyly.]

I watched the messages in the air blankly and said.

'Did you make a lot yesterday? It must be good.'

There was no answer. I spoke once again.

'Don't keep pretending and tell me. I know you are watching.'

[Ah, hahaha... you caught me?]

It was Bihyung's voice.

'How much did you earn?'

[...T-That. Um.]

I stared silently.

[Sigh, right. How did you know again...? I just can't get over it. Take this.]

[Dokkaebi 'Bihyung' has given you 4,500 coins.]

I thought so. This damn dokkaebi.

[...The constellations don't use the sponsorship system and send it directly to me. I don't know why. I'll give it to you later. Ah, there are these messages as well.]

Messages suddenly popped up.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is satisfied with your scenario]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is convinced of your judgment.]

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' is satisfied with your plan.]

.....

This was why I didn't get the support messages yesterday.

I had been curious because such a great thing happened and I received less income than I thought.

[Coins Possessed: 23,050 C]

I invested a lot of the coins I obtained last time into stats and now I had a lot of coins again.

It was once again time to improve my stats. Then let's do it moderately. I couldn't open the attributes window so I had to remember the exact level of my stats.

First... stamina was important.

[1,200 coins have been invested in stamina.]

[Stamina Lv. 12 -> Stamina Lv. 15]

[The durability of your body has greatly increased!]

I had no separate passive attack skill so I also raised my strength.

[1,600 coins have been invested in strength.]

[Strength Lv. 11 -> Strength Lv. 15]

[A stronger force will come from your muscles!]

For agility, it was enough to be able to evade.

[400 coins have been invested in agility.]

[Agility Lv. 10 -> Agility Lv. 11]

[Now you can move a bit faster.]

I needed to maintain White Pure Star Energy so magic power must be over level 10.

[1,200 coins have been invested in magic power.]

[Magic Power Lv. 6 -> Magic Power Lv. 10]

[A mysterious energy lives in your soul.]

I could invest more than this but I purposefully didn't. Once I arrived in Chungmuro, there was another place where I would have to use a lot of coins.

Besides, I had spent 4,400 coins just now. It was both easy and difficult to use. If I had been born with decent stats, I wouldn't have to spend so many coins.

Someone born with level 1 stamina... in Ways of Destruction, even Lee Gilyoung's stamina would be higher than that.

[By the way, I forgot... two more scenarios are recommended. You are really great. It seems that I will soon be able to upgrade my channel level.]

'I see.'

I couldn't get the support of a sponsor like other incarnations, so I needed to collect more coins. But the reason why I didn't see the effect of contracting with Bihyung was because his channel was small.

The 'minor' constellations weren't enough. In order to gather more coins, it would take more constellations to configure the channel. Once I went to Chungmuro, the environment would be ready soon.

"If everybody is ready, we will leave. You aren't missing anything?"

My companions gathered together and nodded. Looking at their nervous faces, all of them seemed to have been enlightened by yesterday.

Finally, the journey to Chungmuro began.



They had crossed half the railroad lines when the system message popped up.

[The second main scenario is enabled.]

+

[Main Scenario #1 – Meeting]

Category: Main

Difficulty: E

Clear Conditions: Cross the tunnel and meet the survivors in the first main base.

Time Limit: None

Compensation: 500 coins

Failure: ???

+

The message made me realize that it was really starting. Unlike the first main scenario, the second scenario had a 'main base.' Jung Heewon asked.

"The main base? Where is that?"

An answer wasn't required. Another message immediately appeared.

[The next main base is 'Chungmuro.'

"Is it Chungmuro? It is only three more stops..."

It was originally like that.

*Ku ku ku ku!*

The ground rats appeared. There were around 30 ground rats. Jung Heewon stiffened.

"...Go three stops through this."

It was Lee Hyunsung who came forward.

"I'll take the vanguard."

Thanks to the support of his sponsor, Lee Hyunsung's total stats were now 37. He had earned less coins than me but he was chasing me... this was the advantage of being born with high stats.

If I knew this, I would've done regular push-ups.

"I'll take the rear, Hyung."

Lee Gilyoung's total stats were still low but he was able to use Diverse Communication more flexibly through steady skill training.

"Please leave it to me."

Yoo Sangah made a thread with magic power to block the movements of the ground rats. Her attack ability was low but her overall stats were similar to Jung Heewon.

*Kwajik!*

"...Isn't it just a lot of numbers?"

Finally, there was no need to talk about Jung Heewon. Compared to Lee Hyunsung, her total stats were low but her skills were sufficient.

There was the exclusive skill 'Judgment Time' that belonged to the 'Judge of Destruction.' As long as the opponent in front of her was 'wicked' according to the Absolute Good constellations, Jung Heewon wouldn't lose.

The last ground rat fell down. Lee Hyunsung held the shield by his side and started sweating.

"Sigh... this seems to be enough."

In fact, this shouldn't have been cleared so easily. No matter how simple the pattern of the ground rats was, fighting 30 of them was tough. I wouldn't be able to annihilate them myself without activating Bookmark. The party had become stronger.

They advanced further through the tunnel. Finally, a new platform appeared in front of me.

"Yaksu Station. By the way... there is nobody? No, that's not it."

Yaksu Station was filled with dead bodies and ground rat corpses. Based on the injuries, some of the people were killed by Yoo Jonghyuk, not the ground rats.

"Keep going. There are two stops left."

We continued to advance. Anyway, the distance from Yaksu to Dongdae was less than 1km in a straight line.

Once we arrived at the entrance of Dongdae Station, we encountered another group of ground rats and repelled them. We only moved a total of 2km along a simple path, but the fighting was so tough that the party's fitness dropped quickly.

"We will take a break here."

"Sigh... there is one stop left. We should just go there and relax..."

"Nobody knows if we can rest or not once we arrive there."

Everyone was silent at my words. Certainly, monsters weren't the only dangerous things in this world.

I looked around for a moment and said.

"It seems that the people in this station moved quickly. Some basic necessities might remain."

"Ah right. Then..."

After hearing 'basic necessities', Yoo Sangah gently raised her hand. Yoo Sangah and Jung Heewon's eyes met. No words were exchanged but both of them nodded at the same time. Jung Heewon saw my look and asked me.

"What is it? Does Dokja-ssi want to know?"

Yoo Sangah paled.

"...Heewon-ssi?"

"Ahaha, I'm just joking. Of course, I won't tell anyone."

...A secret only between women. It would be strange if I didn't know what they were talking about. Human physiology didn't stop even in a world like this.

Lee Hyunsung also opened his mouth. "Ah, then I will go to the bathroom."

I was surprised for a moment but there was no reason not to use well-built facilities. This was why the subway was convenient.

“I’ll go with you.”

It was Lee Gilyoung. The two people walked side by side. I looked at their rear view and thought they looked like affectionate brothers with a large age difference.

Yoo Sangah asked me.

“Will Dokja-ssi be alone?”

“I will go above ground for a bit.”

“Huh? There will be poisonous fog if you go out... will it be okay?”

“I’m only going for a bit.”

Jung Heewon narrowed her eyes at my words.

“...Something is suspicious. Dokja-ssi, are you going to eat something good alone?”

I looked at Jung Heewon for a moment.

“It is a man’s secret.”



After a while, I stood in front of Exit 6 of Dongdae Station. According to the information I read beforehand, this place was surely...

[You have been exposed to poisonous fog.]

The effect of the poisonous rhinos was still visible.

This time I didn’t buy the Ellain Monkey’s Lungs so I had to work quickly. I jumped up the escalator to the east while holding my breath. Not long after that, a bronze coloured shining statue appeared.

[A constellation wearing a straw mat is filled with expectations at your actions.]

The statue was based on the appearance of a monk who lived in the mid-Joseon Dynasty. I felt an unknown nobility coming from the fact of the monk holding a

bamboo stick.

I confirmed the name written vertically under the statue. Yujeong Samyeongdang.

Okay, good. There were no signs of anyone yet...

I stood in front of the statue, holding my hands together.

[A constellation wearing a straw mat is delighted with your actions.]

[100 coins have been sponsored.]

I didn't hesitate to use White Pure Star Energy to activate the Blade of Faith.

[A constellation wearing a straw mat is puzzled by your actions.]

Then I struck the statue of Samyeongdang.

[A constellation wearing a straw mat is appalled by your actions.]

# Chapter 26

## Judgment Time (4)

A few minutes later, I once again entered Dongdae Station and ate a ground rat. It was in order to heal the skin contaminated by the poisonous fog.

It took a little time but the contamination could be recovered by eating the meat of an underground species.

[...Hey! Are you crazy? What did you do just now?]

I was eating when I heard Bihyung's voice furiously berating me.

'Shut up.'

[No, this isn't an issue you can dismiss. You destroyed a constellation's idol! Do you want to see my channel fail? Once the 'Bald General of Justice' begins to talk...]

The idol of a constellation. Every world had their own constellations, South Korea as well.

By the way, Bihyung said it was the 'Bald General of Justice.' He was a great person in South Korea but...

Actually, I wasn't the type of person to say that.

[A constellation wearing a straw mat is furious at your atrocious actions.]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is laughing.]

There was a difference in the degree of all idols, but they had the power of a constellation sealed in them.

If I released the seal of the idol in the right way, I could gain a certain amount of power, such as an item or skill that the constellation used in their lifetime.

However, 'unlocking the seal' took a long time and I wasn't sure if I could get the skill

I wanted.

I looked at Ways of Survival on my smartphone.

[But if it is sealed in the bronze statue of Samyeongdang, how did you get the skill?]

“There is a saying that if you meet Buddha, kill Buddha.”

[What? Don't tell me...]

“Haha, I was just trying it out... but it is true. All the statues aren't just for worship.”

[Hey! This jerk, you should watch your mouth. You might be cursed by the constellation.]

At the last gateway to enter Chungmuro, the ‘skill’ of Samyeongdang was essential.

And the most surefire way to get the skill was to destroy the idol. Of course, I could buy something similar from the Dokkaebi Bag but... the more coins I saved, the better.

“Then did you resolve the ‘man's secret’ well?”

I quickly turned off my smartphone screen. My companions, including Jung Heewon, had gathered.

“Yes. And I have something for you.”

I pulled out the items I gained from the idol. As luck would have it, the Samyeongdang idol contained items and skills.

[Samyeongdang's Beads]

[Samyeongdang's Straw Mat]

Rags and old beads. There were questions in the eyes of everyone present. I knew what they were thinking.

But I also knew this. In this world, ‘old’ was more likely to be ‘good.’

“They seem like good items. Because they are souvenirs of a great person.”

“Great person?”

“Do you know Samyeongdang?”

[A constellation wearing a straw mat has paused at your actions.]

Jung Heewon asked with a stupid expression.

“...Who is that?”

[A constellation wearing a straw mat wishes to appear before character ‘Jung Heewon’.]

“Ah! I know!”

Fortunately, someone knew. Needless to say, it was Yoo Sangah.

“I remember seeing it when I was studying Korean history! Isn’t he a monk from the Joseon Dynasty?”

“Yes, that’s right.”

“When the Korean military was struggling to defend against the Japanese invasion... he fought in the Nowongpyeong battle and Wukwandong battle!”

As expected from Yoo Sangah. I also studied Korean history but I didn’t know this.

[A constellation wearing a straw mat is touched by character ‘Yoo Sangah’.]

I nodded and said.

“Anyway, these items have his strength.”

“...Really?”

“Wow, it is real!”

Jung Heewon and Lee Hyunsung were surprised when they confirmed the item information.

“But how did Dokja-ssi know to get this?”

“Just, I put my hands together in front of the Samyeongdang statue and... they fell from the sky.”

“Huh? No way...”

I thought it was ridiculous but there was a reason people said such ridiculous words.

I put on a mock solemn expression as I watched the party.

“I think... it was sent by Samyeongdang for South Korea.”

“Ah...”

Their ‘ah’ were filled with many meanings. I ignored them and kept talking. It wasn’t like I was asking for them to listen.

“He might’ve left his belongings to save the country, just like during the Japanese invasion of South Korea. Anyway, now South Korea is a country undergoing turmoil.”

[A constellation wearing a straw mat is moved by your words.]

In times of turmoil, scammers always gained power.

“...In this strange world, it isn’t weird if something like this happens. Maybe Samyeongdang is one of the ‘constellations.’ Isn’t that right?”

Surprisingly, Yoo Sangah seemed convinced first. Maybe she didn’t want me to be embarrassed. The funny thing was that once Yoo Sangah agreed, Lee Hyunsung was immediately convinced.

“Indeed, Samyeongdang...”

Lee Hyunsung grew up with patriotism for a long time and looked like he was reminiscing on the principle of military service. Lee Gilyoung also seemed curious.

It was only Jung Heewon who was watching me like it was nonsense.

[A constellation wearing a straw mat likes your revealing words.]

[The constellation ‘Bald General of Justice’ forgives your sins.]

Bihyung looked at the sky with a 'Is this okay?' expression before looking dumbfounded.

The power of a constellation was directly linked to their fame. Thus, the constellations loved it when their stories were spread this way. Where was a constellation that hated being praised?

"I will give Samyeongdang's Beads to Yoo Sangah, since you know him well."

"Really? Can I accept it?"

"I think Samyeongdang will be delighted if Samyeongdang uses it."

In fact, the performance of Samyeongdang's Beads wasn't good compared to what the sponsor used it for. It wasn't a sponsor's star relic so maybe the fact that the Samyeongdang wasn't a world-recognized figure had an effect.

It was still a B class item so it had a secondary option of boosting magic power to increase magic power recovery.

Jung Heewon watched Yoo Sangah like she was envious and said.

"Yoo Sangah knows a lot of things. I didn't know about Samyeongdang because I didn't do very well at school."

"Ah... that... that."

"I'm joking, joking. Don't make such an expression."

I spoke to the sulky Jung Heewon.

"I also have something for Jung Heewon-ssi."

"For me? Is it that straw mat?"

"Yes."

"It's okay. No matter how urgent, I don't want to wear such a thing."

"...Just try it. You won't regret it."

Jung Heewon hesitated for a moment before throwing on the straw mat. She was trying to be fashionable but she just looked like a beggar.

[A constellation who likes comradeship condemns your actions.]

[A constellation who praises friendship likes your actions.]

It would be different if the star relic 'Samyeongdang's Bamboo Stick and Straw Sandals' came out, but the other two items weren't necessary for me right now.

Jung Heewon saw her reflection on the screen door of the subway and made a slightly complicated expression.

"It is hard to explain but... I suddenly feel like I can harness the power of justice."

Samyeongdang's Straw Mat was an item that enhanced the justice and willpower of the incarnation. I didn't need it but it was a pretty good item for Jung Heewon.

"You said Samyeongdang? I feel sorry for some reason. I should study harder."

[The constellation 'Bald General of Justice' is happy at this situation.]

[100 coins have been sponsored.]

I jokingly said.

"Then let's put our hands together and pray."

◇ ◇ ◇

It was a joke but Jung Heewon really went to pray.

Jung Heewon was contaminated by the poisonous fog and spoke while eating a ground rat.

"...But who broke it? Surely it wasn't Dokja-ssi?"

"..."

"...Dokja-ssi?"

"Be prepared. We will be at Chungmuro soon."

I looked at the dark tunnel.

It had been 20 minutes since Lee Gilyoung used Diverse Communication, allowing them to safely move forward.

Considering the fact that Dongdae to Chungmuro was 1km in a straight line, it was time for 'that' to appear.

[A new sub scenario has arrived!]

Indeed, as soon as I thought about it.

"Everybody step back."

+

[Sub Scenario – Welcome Prison]

Category: Sub

Difficulty: D~F

Clear Conditions: Escape from Welcome Prison within the time limit.

Time Limit: 1 hour

Compensation: 300 coins

Failure: ???

+

[Sub scenario – Welcome Prison has begun!]

Perhaps Yoo Jonghyuk had suffered quite a bit in this scenario.

This scenario was one of the most painful traps for a regressor.

Yoo Sangah asked.

"Welcome Prison? What is this?"

She would know without asking.

"It is coming. Everyone, please keep your mind straight."

Before my words were over, a haze overcame me. The fog that instantly occupied the tunnel blocked their field of view. The party members in the immediate vicinity

couldn't be seen. When I looked around, I could only see a distorted scenery, as if I was on drugs.

"Uwah... I feel bad!"

Jung Heewon screamed. Maybe Jung Heewon was seeing something different from what I saw now.

"Dokja."

The voice I didn't want to hear. That forgotten voice was heard in a drug-like landscape. If I was this way, my other party members would be worse.

"...Something feels strange. Dokja-ssi! Are you there?"

"Dokja-ssi! Dokja-ssi!"

In this distorted vision, the voices of my party members were gradually fading.

[Welcome Prison].

A space that led to madness by touching a person's trauma.

"Dokja, you didn't see anything. Understood?"

The landscape disappeared and the face of a person popped up. I smiled bitterly as I stared into the air. I wanted to deny reality.

[The exclusive skill, 'Fourth Wall' is activated!]

[Due to the skill effect, immunity to Welcome Prison has occurred.]

The moment his mind relaxed, the uncomfortable feeling diminished.

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' admires your spirit.]

[100 coins have been sponsored.]

[The curious constellations are sorry that they can't peek at your memories.]

As the power of Welcome Prison weakened, I felt a sense of alarm.

"Everyone, calm down and take deep breaths."

Those trapped in Welcome Prison would lose their minds and unleash their madness around them. Thus, the most dangerous thing in Welcome Prison was the companions around you. Yoo Jonghyuk's solo behaviour might be because he was worried about this prison.

"S-Soldier Lee Hyunsung. Did you hear wrong?"

"I was wrong. I was wrong Mother!"

"T-This dog bastard!"

...I was too late. I heard the screams of people filled with madness. But it wasn't everyone.

"...Dokja-ssi?"

At this moment, Yoo Sangah's appearance was revealed in Welcome Prison. Samyeongdang's Beads around her wrist was glowing brightly. Fortunately, it worked.

I approached Yoo Sangah and said.

"Cover the surroundings. From now on, I will destroy this space."

Yoo Sangah nodded with a nervous expression.

[The exclusive skill 'Destroy Evil Lv. 1' is activated.]

Destroy Evil. It was one level higher than the Repel Evil skill that could be bought with coins. It was a skill that I obtained after breaking the bronze statue of Samyeongdang.

[The exclusive skill 'Destroy Evil Lv. 1' has turned off 'Welcome Prison'.]

Indeed, it was a skill used by Samyeongdang. If I had bought Repel Evil, it would've taken a minute to release it.

*Sururuk.*

As the fog retreated and Welcome Prison disappeared, his companions started to appear one by one.

“O-Our resolve! We are the South Korean army, loyal to the nation and the people!”

“Uh... Uh... Mother.”

The trauma could be seen with one glance. Lee Hyunsung was bowing with his head on the ground, while Lee Gilyoung had his head on his knees and was shaking.

Yoo Sangah came forward first.

“Lee Hyunsung-ssi? Gilyoung! Please wake up!”

At this moment, a blade flew from the rear. Fortunately, the blade wasn’t fast and it wasn’t difficult to avoid.

“...I will kill all of you.”

Jung Heewon was waving her sword through the air like a madman.

My heart ached as I watched Jung Heewon’s eyes became gradually redder.

This was dangerous. It was a sign of ‘Demon Slaying.’

*Peok!*

I stunned Jung Heewon by strongly hitting her in the back of the neck. Luckily, Jung Heewon was intact.

I thought it wouldn’t be like this with Samyeongdang’s Straw Mat but Jung Heewon’s mental state was more fragile than I expected.

“Yoo Sangah, please look after Jung Heewon-ssi.”

“...Yes, yes!”

“It isn’t over yet.”

[You have met the conditions to clear the sub scenario!]

[You have earned 300 coins.]

Monsters appeared as soon as the clear message showed up. They were a mass of

liquid, reminiscent of ectoplasm.

The 8 grade Specter.

] It was the specters who made Welcome Prison. I used White Pure Star Energy to invoke Blade of Faith.

*Sukakak!*

Fortunately, the battle itself wasn't difficult. In the first place, the specters weren't difficult if Welcome Prison was destroyed.

The creepy and weird specters were destroyed.

[Specter's Stone.]

I put the fallen stones into my pocket. This needed to be picked up. Thanks to Yoo Sangah, the others were recovering quickly.

"A-Are you okay?"

The one who recovered the fastest was Lee Hyunsung. Lee Hyunsung heard the story and bowed his head with surprise.

"...Thank you. I almost got into big trouble. I also want to thank Dokja-ssi."

"It is nothing."

"I have a headache... '

Lee Gilyoung's head was pounding. I stroked Lee Gilyoung's hair. He pretended to be okay but perhaps the one with the most terrible trauma in this place was this child.

I saw a pale light in the distance. Yoo Sangah said,

"Dokja-ssi, I think it is over.

I worried about it for a short moment. Jung Heewon was stunned and it was difficult for others to exercise their power. Would we be okay to enter Chungmuro at this rate?

But my concerns were resolved by another person.

A blade loomed in the darkness. But it was a pure threat, without the intent to harm.

“Who are you? Don’t you know that this area is our hunting ground?”

In the faint light of the entrance, a girl holding a long sword stood. She looked to be 17 and was wearing a school uniform.

She was wearing a hood like she was trying to hide her name tag, but her appearance was noticeable.

“Ah, this girl...!”

Yoo Sangah had keen eyes and recognized her first. I also knew her. It was because she was one of the main characters of Ways of Survival.

The only survivor of Daepong Girls High School, Lee Jihye. She was one of the reasons why Yoo Jonghyuk went straight to Chungmuro in the shortest time.

“...Did you guys beat the specters?”

Lee Jihye discovered the stone in my hand and was surprised.

“How did you... only Master can catch them?”

I immediately used a skill.

[The exclusive skill, Character List is activated.]

[Character Information]

Name: Lee Jihye

Age: 17 years old

Constellation Sponsor: Maritime War God

Private Attribute: Scarred Sword Demon (Rare)

Exclusive Skills: Sword Training Lv. 3, Demon Slaying Lv. 1, Absolute Sense Lv. 2, Ghost Walk Lv. 1.

Stigma: Sea Battle Lv. 1, Large Army Command Lv. 1.

Overall Stats: Stamina Lv. 13, Strength Lv. 12, Agility Lv. 13, Magic Power Lv. 9.

Overall Evaluation: A person who evolved into a ‘scarred sword demon’ after killing

her closest friend. The sponsor behind her has an affinity for you and your colleagues.  
\* 'Starter Pack' is currently applied.

There was nothing unusual.

Maritime War God.

As scheduled, it was the sponsor behind Lee Jihye. She was a must in future maritime wars.

[The constellation 'Bald General of Justice' is touched at meeting an old comrade.]  
[Lee Jihye's sponsor welcomes the 'Bald General of Justice.']

I felt a faint breeze in the subway tunnel where no trains were running. Looking at Lee Jihye's hair fluttering in the wind, I realized again.

[Main Scenario #2 – Meeting has ended.]  
[The compensation will be settled.]

Yes, we finally arrived. This was Chungmuro.



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